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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

EXCELLENCE IN THE SURFACE NAVY

by

Gregg G. Gullickson

and

Richard D. Chenette

June 1984

Thesis Advisor:

Reuben Harris

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Excellence in the Surface Navy

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## ABSTRACT

"Excellence in the Surface Navy" is examined, first by interviewing twenty one senior naval officers and then by going aboard six ships identified by the senior officers as being the embodiment of excellence. Chapters I through IV is a summary of the indicators of excellence on which the senior officers focused. Such topics as awards, ship cleanliness, and operational performance are discussed. Chapter V summarizes the views of these senior officers on the means used to achieve excellence. From the shipboard interviews, it is concluded that the excellent ships possess a common set of attributes that account for their excellence. The attributes are: good ships getting better; pride in evidence at all levels; teamwork, not just a concept but a way of life; the ship in automatic; high energy level/bias towards action; presence of a common vision and shared values; as the captain, so is the ship; sailors, our most important resource; and oh yes, task accomplishment. These attributes are discussed in chapters VI through XV. Recommendations are made for expanding analysis of excellence in the Surface Navy and other naval communities.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
II.	THEY'RE WATCHING . . . . .	13
III.	EXTERNAL INDICATORS OF EXCELLENCE . . . . .	16
	A. GOING THE EXTRA MILE . . . . .	16
	B. SHOOTING STRAIGHT WITH THE BOSS . . . . .	17
	C. ALPHABET SCUP ON THE BRIDGE WING . . . . .	18
	D. FINISHING FOOT RACES . . . . .	19
	E. THEY FIX THEMSELVES . . . . .	20
	F. SUPPORT FOR THE STAFF . . . . .	21
IV.	WATERFRONT INDICATORS OF EXCELLENCE . . . . .	22
	A. CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO EXCELLENCE . . . . .	22
	B. IT'S MY SHIP! . . . . .	24
	C. ATTENTION TO KEY PLAYERS AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS . . . . .	27
V.	THE TRIED AND TRUE METHODS . . . . .	29
	A. THE CAPTAIN HAS A PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	30
	B. THE CAPTAIN IS OUT AND ABOUT . . . . .	31
	C. THESE ARE THE CAPTAIN'S STANDARDS . . . . .	31
	D. EVERYTHING IS PUSHED DOWNHILL . . . . .	32
	E. THEY IGNORE THE RIGHT THINGS . . . . .	33
	F. THEY HAVE "GOOD" DISCIPLINE . . . . .	34
	G. CHIEFS ASSUME THEIR PROPER ROLE . . . . .	34
	H. THE CREW KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON . . . . .	35
	I. THEY CARE FOR THEIR PEOPLE . . . . .	35
	J. THEY PLAN AHEAD . . . . .	37
	K. THEIR PROGRAMS ARE BETTER ACROSS THE BOARD . .	38



	I. CN TO THE SHIPS . . . . .	39
VI.	CN THE DECK PLATES . . . . .	40
VII.	GCOD SHIPS GETTING BETTER . . . . .	45
VIII.	PRIDE IN EVIDENCE AT ALL LEVELS . . . . .	48
	A. THE PCWER CF RECOGNIZING GOOD PERFORMANCE . .	49
	B. ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE . . . . .	50
IX.	TEAMWORK NOT JUST A CONCEPT BUT A WAY OF LIFE . .	54
	A. LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT . . . . .	54
	B. IT STARTS WITH ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIPS . . .	57
	C. TEAM AT THE TOP . . . . .	58
	D. FOR THE NCN-TEAM PLAYER, STRIKE TWO, YOU'RE OUT . . . . .	60
X.	THE SHIP IN AUTOMATIC . . . . .	63
	A. THE SHIP DRIVING PROGRAMS, AND NOT PROGRAMS DRIVING THE SHIP . . . . .	64
	B. THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, BATTLE READINESS . . . . .	64
	C. IT NOT ONLY WORKS, IT LOOKS GOOD . . . . .	68
	D. BRINGING THEM INTO THE FOLD . . . . .	70
	E. THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS, SIMPLE AND CONSISTENT . . . . .	73
	F. THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDS (NO STANDARDS, NO EXCELLENCE) . . . . .	74
	G. IN THE KNCW . . . . .	77
XI.	HIGH ENERGY LEVEL/BIAS TOWARDS ACTION . . . . .	79
	A. FIX IT NOW . . . . .	79
	B. INVOLVEMENT YES, MICRC-MANAGEMENT NO . . . . .	81
	C. THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE STARTS ON DAY ONE . .	82
XII.	PRESENCE OF A COMMON VISION AND SHARED VALUES . .	84
	A. A FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT . . . . .	84
	B. FOR THE CAUSE, BATTLE READINESS . . . . .	85

C.	VALUE DRIVEN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS . . .	86
XIII.	AS THE CAPTAIN, SO IS THE SHIP . . . . .	89
A.	IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPTAIN . . . . .	89
B.	THROUGH THE CAPTAIN'S EYES . . . . .	89
C.	THROUGH THE CREW'S EYES . . . . .	95
D.	WHAT THEY DID AND WHAT THEY STRESSED . . . . .	96
XIV.	SAILORS, OUR MCST IMPORTANT RESOURCE . . . . .	104
A.	CONCERN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS GROWTH .	105
B.	NO ONE FELT UNDERUTILIZED . . . . .	107
XV.	OH YES, TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT . . . . .	110
XVI.	CONCLUSIONS, CCMMENTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . .	113
	LIST OF REFERENCES . . . . .	118
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST . . . . .	119

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ever wonder what criteria the commodore used to rate your ship against the others in the squadron, what those captains on the type commanders staff used to judge the performance of one ship in the force against another, or maybe how that ship across the pier which won the Battle "E" or the Marjorie Sterrett award did things differently than your ship? Well, we did. And for a change, we had the time to attempt to find answers to these questions. But where to begin? How about by asking these senior officers what they were thinking when they were observing and judging the ships in the Surface Navy, getting their recommendations of ships that personified their definition of excellence, and then going aboard those ships to find out how they conducted business. That's what we did. We learned that a lot of our hunches were correct, a couple were dead wrong, and that talking with the bosses and observing the superstars was an opportunity from which every member of the surface community could benefit.

In our research of "excellence in the Surface Navy" we wanted to find ships that were the embodiment of superior performance and then, as best we could, to tell their story: what they look like, what they emphasize, why they manage and lead the way they do, and how they go about achieving the results that gain them the reputation of being excellent. Obviously, this was no small undertaking. But undertake it we did, and we think our findings will be of interest to surface warfare officers and enlisted personnel, not because this is a definitive study or because this study provides in an easy-to-understand cookbook manner how one achieves excellence in surface ships, but because this



allows the reader to approach the subject of shipboard leadership and management from a positive perspective instead of the all too common "don't do this because ..." teaching we frequently encounter in the surface community. Obviously there is a place for learning from the mistakes of others (no one likes to repeat a mistake or relearn a painful lesson), but we feel that there is a lot to be learned from those who have been successful at shipboard leadership and management, and that in the past, this source of positive information has not been tapped to the extent it could or should be.

Rather than rely on a group of numerical indicators (e.g., inspection results, readiness ratings, retention ratings) to identify a group of excellent ships, we elected to identify the ships that we would study by getting the subjective opinions of senior naval officers intimately involved with surface ships in the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. We chose this approach because, in the final analysis, it is the opinions of senior officers in the surface warfare community that count the most when determining what is considered good and bad in the community and who will be selected to lead the community in the future. For, although a lot of attention is given to scores on exercises and inspections and statistics for retention and readiness ratings, the selection of Battle "E" winners and the criteria used to select officers for promotion still rely primarily on subjective judgement by seniors of their juniors. In conducting our study, we interviewed twenty one officers who were either senior, post-command officers on the surface type commander staffs or were squadron or group commanders. We asked these officers to explain how they judged surface ships and how they differentiated between top performing excellent ships and fleet average ships. We also asked them to provide any insight they might have regarding

how they thought top performing ships conducted business, that is, what did the top performing ships appear to be doing differently than the other ships? After these senior officers provided us with their views on surface ship excellence, we asked them to identify ships that personified excellence as they had just described it. This they did with gusto. They did not have to do a lot of thinking to come up with the names of ships that stood out for their excellence. Many ships were mentioned. In general, there was a feeling that there are a lot of good ships sitting at the piers and steaming to their next station assignment; however, there were a relatively small number of ships that were consensus stand outs, the type of ships we were after. We ended up with a list of ten ships in each fleet. We then were able to identify four ships in each fleet that were (1) on the consensus excellent ship list and (2) available for interviews during the time we wanted to conduct the interviews.

In chapters two through five, we will take you to the commodore's cabin and to the halls of the type commander to let you hear what twenty one senior surface warfare officers had to say about excellence in the Surface Navy. Then in chapters six through fifteen we will take you aboard ships that these senior officers felt were the embodiment of excellence, and we will attempt to tell their story.

There were few surprises in listening to senior officers discuss excellence in the Surface Navy; yet, we believe many surface warfaremen will be interested in hearing what they had to say about such topics as the roles they see captains and chiefs filling on their excellent ships and what they look for when they sit in their offices and visit their ships, all the time judging and determining how effective a ship is. We would describe our interviews with senior officers as interesting and informative, and if we had finished

our study with just the interviews, we would have considered it a highly rewarding and worthwhile experience. We felt that the interviews provided us with insight into what excellence in the Surface Navy looks like and how it is achieved, and that with this insight we could become more effective naval officers. However, we did not appreciate that the best was yet to come, for if seeing is believing, we are now believers. We believe that there is excellence in the Surface Navy. There are ships that are not just better than other ships, but ships that stand head and shoulders above the ships they steam in company with. And going aboard these excellent ships is not only interesting, it is enlightening. Having seen excellence in action, we now feel that we are much better prepared to strive for it in the remainder of our careers. We hope that the reader can share in our enlightenment as he reads our description of excellence in the Surface Navy.

## II. THEY'RE WATCHING

They're out there....the commanders and captains and commodores and admirals who work on the group and type commander staffs. They're the ones who give your ship a mission, who read your messages, who monitor your inspection results, who hear the latest gossip about your ship. You may or may not ever see them face to face. But they're out there. And somehow they're sizing up your ship. How do they do it? What do they think the best ships are doing that average ones aren't? How long does it take them to formulate an opinion of a ship? What characteristics of excellence can they "see" from their desks? What do they find when they arrive aboard the best ships? These are the questions we sought answers for as we talked to these officers.

Having the opportunity to get their candid opinions was a very rewarding experience, to say the least. After all, how often do a couple of mid grade surface warfare officers get to find out what so many senior officers think about excellence in the surface Navy? Without exception, we were impressed with the candor and energy of the officers we interviewed. We left every meeting feeling the Navy had done something very right in placing such dynamic officers in their current positions of leadership.

What we learned from talking to these officers was that on the one hand there definitely is a general consensus at their level as to what excellence in the Surface Navy looks like. On the other hand, variety enters the discussion when you ask them how such excellence is achieved, although the basic tenets of leadership and management remain.



But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let us give you some insight into the process we used to gather and distill our data. In developing our interview questions, we used a model for analyzing organizations called the 7S model. We hit upon the idea of using the 7S model while reading Peters and Waterman's book, In Search of Excellence, a recent best seller that attempted to do with excellent American businesses what we were attempting to do with excellent U. S. Navy ships, namely identify what made them excellent. This model, as adapted by us for Navy ships, looks at organizations from the following perspectives:

- STYLE: Officer and enlisted leadership style.
- SKILLS: Unique talents and experiences of key officers and enlisted personnel.
- STRATEGY: A command's direction and plan of action for the future.
- STAFF: Professional background and experience of officers and enlisted personnel.
- SYSTEMS: How information moves around the ship, and how specific programs are administered.
- STRUCTURE: Characteristics of the ship's organization chart, including both primary responsibilities and collateral/secondary responsibilities.
- SHARED VALUES: Intangibles, such as the command attitude, values, norms, and guiding concepts.

We began the process of summarizing our findings by listing the indications of excellence identified by each officer. From this list, we identified those indications which were stressed repeatedly. We further grouped these indications into two broad categories, namely "external" and "waterfront" indicators of excellence. The external indicators of excellence are those which senior officers can monitor without physically seeing the ship. These frequently

would be the measures by which the type commander or an officer on his staff would judge a ship. Waterfront indicators of excellence are those which senior officers observe by actually visiting the ship and observing it first hand, on the deck plates. These indicators would normally be observed by squadron commodores, their staffs, and others who gain impressions of ships by visiting them.

We begin by summarizing the external indicators of excellence. Keep in mind that what you are about to read is not presented as a recipe for leadership or management success. These are just the points which the officers we interviewed stressed.

### III. EXTERNAL INDICATORS OF EXCELLENCE

#### A. GOING THE EXTRA MILE

It almost goes without saying that senior officers consider operational performance to be an important, the most important, measure of excellence in the fleet. They expect all ships to be able to get underway and meet their commitments. However, once they are underway, a group of ships emerges as standouts, not in any one area, but across the board. Furthermore, when these superstars return to port, they perform as they had at sea. There is a definite link between excellence in port and underway. It is the ships which are both top steamers and tops pierside which personify excellence in the Surface Navy.

But what are these ships doing differently? To begin with, the best ships invariably demonstrate a willingness to "go the extra mile." They put forth greater effort than average ships when carrying out assigned tasking. A commodore cited the example of a replenishment ship in his squadron that routinely provided an extra measure of service to the ships it was resupplying. The crew of this ship had a reputation of being willing to work long into the night to provide fuel and supplies to other ships in the squadron. Here was a ship that seemed to be saying "We're going to 'make it happen' no matter what it takes."

Ships that carry out assignments with flair impressed the officers we interviewed. One commodore admired a commanding officer who shot the ship's guns at every opportunity and steamed at flank speed when proceeding from one commitment to the next. The commodore pointed to the positive impact this had on the crew, saying that "they loved

their commanding officer and would do anything for him." Another commodore sighted the example of a commanding officer who, during a routine transit, had shown a lot of initiative by conducting a drug raid on a fishing vessel that was suspected of transporting illegal drugs. The operation was carried out without a hitch, despite the fact that the commanding officer found it necessary to fire warning shots across the bow of the fishing vessel before the master would permit his vessel to be searched. Every aspect of this operation was carried out flawlessly, including keeping senior officers in the chain of command fully informed of the operation as it progressed. Such excellent performance was considered typical of this ship.

#### B. SHOOTING STRAIGHT WITH THE BOSS

The next indicator of excellence relates to the manner in which the best ships communicate up the chain of command. They seem to produce higher quality messages and reports than fleet average ships. Not only are their messages timely, clear, and concise but they don't raise more questions than they answer. Senior officers find it very frustrating when they have to dig through a message for five minutes to pick out the main point.

It's clearly important to be candid when reporting information to seniors. This means that the best ships build credibility by not hesitating to report bad news along with the good. As one officer put it, "They put their marker down," meaning they let their boss know exactly where they stand. Also, when reporting problems, they simultaneously discuss alternative solutions and then state which alternative they intend to follow. Typical of senior officer comments on this subject were those of a commodore who noted that his best ships did a better job of keeping



him informed. Their messages reflected detailed planning. Every report told what and why something had happened and what action was being taken, when appropriate. The messages pointed out not only the symptoms but also the causes of problems along with the action they were taking to resolve the causes of the problems. Such thorough staffing by a ship made the commodore's and his staff's job easy, and this impressed him.

Although one group commander felt that the best ships tended to have fewer equipment casualty reports (CASREPTs) than other ships, virtually every senior officer thought the best ships would usually have an average number of them. One commodore's comments were fairly representative. He said he gets a little suspicious if ships in his squadron have unusually high or low numbers of CASREPTs. He wonders if those with many CASREPTs are maintaining their equipment properly. Conversely, he wonders if those that have submitted few or no CASREPTs are failing to report or are aware of all their equipment deficiencies.

### C. ALPHABET SOUP ON THE BRIDGE WING

We found that senior officers consider departmental awards to be fairly good indicators of excellence. But most don't think the best ships make winning these awards an end in itself. Rather, attainment of these awards appears to be a fallout of having done other things right.

It was interesting listening to commodores describe how they decided which ship in the squadron would be awarded the battle efficiency (battle "E") award. We sensed they try very hard to award the battle "E" to the best ship in the squadron. But because many squadrons have two or more ships which a commodore believes are worthy of the award, he is sometimes forced to split hairs in choosing the recipient.

The consensus was that all battle "E" winners are excellent ships, but frequently there are one or two other ships in the squadron that are just as excellent, if not more so, as the battle "E" winner. Sometimes there are external factors beyond a ship's control that might preclude it from winning the battle "E".

How about the Golden Anchor Award? With all the talk about retention these days, we made a point of asking how much emphasis senior officers place on retention ratings. The answer is that to be perceived as a top performer, a ship doesn't have to have a high retention rate. An officer would typically tell us that a good ship's retention rate might be low because the commanding officer needed to discharge a number of sailors who should have never been allowed in the Navy in the first place. However, an excellent ship would not have consistently below average retention over an extended period of time.

#### D. FINISHING FOOT RACES

In general, the best ships get better results than other ships on inspections which require ship wide involvement, such as Planned Maintenance System (PMS) Inspection, Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV), Command Inspection, Supply Management Inspection (SMI), Nuclear Technical Proficiency Inspection (NTPI), and Operational Propulsion Plant Exam (OPPE). Of these, the OPPE is considered to be by far the most important because of the complexity of the inspection. Another characteristic of the best ships is that they avoid the need for last minute crisis inspection preparations by staying in a state of constant inspection readiness. They excel at both scheduled and surprise inspections.

One senior officer said that the type commander's attention is drawn to those ships that have either barely passed a major inspection or passed it with exceptionally few discrepancies. Doing exceptionally well on inspections does a lot to build a ship's reputation as a top performer. In contrast, those that fail or barely pass them can very quickly gain a poor reputation. In the words of this officer, "It's the guy who ends up \$2000 short in his disbursing audit who really gets our attention." Our impression is that inspections are an indicator that can be compared to a foot race. You're still in the race for excellence if you pass all of the key inspections, but you can put yourself on the sidelines for a relatively long time if you fail just one.

#### E. THEY FIX THEMSELVES

The best ships are self-sufficient in the sense that they do a superior job of maintaining and repairing their equipment. For example, a rear admiral noted that the top performing ships have officers and technicians who know how to tell if their equipment is operating at peak efficiency. He cited the example of non-excellent ships that have their anti-submarine warfare (ASW) sonar streamed and don't even know if it is operating up to design parameters. He thought that better ships detect and correct equipment degradations much more quickly than average ships.

A number of senior officers stressed that the best ships only ask for technical assistance after all on board resources have been exhausted. Then, if a technical expert has occasion to visit the ship, the cognizant shipboard technicians eagerly learn as much as they can from him about how to maintain and repair their equipment. These ships also know how to make the repair system work for them. A

commodore noted that these ships don't assume they will see results by merely filling out a work request and submitting it to an intermediate maintenance activity (IMA). Instead they follow up on the IMAs, closely monitoring the progress of repairs.

#### F. SUPPORT FOR THE STAFF

Senior officers find that officers on the best ships have good rapport with their squadron staffs. Staff officers find that their counterparts on these ships have fewer problems and are generally less trouble to work with. In short, the best ships make the staff's job easy. In describing one of the finest ships that an officer was familiar with, he said that she "had her act together, had a game plan, and kept the staff informed." He mentioned that this ship made a habit of passing information to the staff such as the ship's family-gram, copies of "kudo" messages they had received for jobs well done, and a description of problems the ship was currently tackling.

Another mark of excellent ships is that they seek help from their staff counterparts well in advance of scheduled evolutions such as inspections. For example, one senior officer said that if the best ships needed help in preparing for an CPPE, they would ask for it as much as six months ahead of time. They would not wait until two weeks before the inspection to announce a myriad of deficiencies that would require shipboard and staff personnel to go into a crisis mode in order to correct them.

#### IV. WATERFRONT INDICATORS OF EXCELLENCE

We continue to summarize our findings by presenting the "waterfront indicators of excellence," namely those which senior officers say they observe when they arrive aboard excellent ships. The vast majority of senior officers believe they can do a fairly accurate job of sizing up the overall quality of a ship within a relatively short time after arriving aboard. Some added that on occasion they subsequently decide that their initial evaluations are incorrect. Sometimes they might think a ship is weak only to decide later that it is strong. Hardly ever do they think a ship is strong and later find it weak. Some said they would need several hours to a full day or more aboard ship to do a fair job of appraising it. Others said they could do it within their first five to ten minutes on board. None felt it would take an extended period of time. One commodore explained his visit strategy. He spends twenty minutes with the captain, takes a tour of the ship, meets with the chiefs, lunches with the wardroom, and has a question and answer session with the officers and chiefs. From such a visit, he is able to formulate an impression of how good the ship is. He added that there are times when he changes his opinion of a ship after having an initial favorable or unfavorable impression, but this did not happen very often.

##### A. CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO EXCELLENCE

If one message came through loud and clear from these officers, it was that the best ships are also the cleanest and the best looking topside and between decks. The sponge



and the paint brush held positions of honor for the officers we interviewed. The importance they place on ship cleanliness would be difficult to overemphasize. Although they have different reasons for emphasizing cleanliness, they all think it goes hand in hand with top performance. For example, a commodore said that cleanliness standards reflect the quality of standards that will be set in other areas such as preservation and maintenance. A rear admiral drove home the importance of cleanliness when he said that of all the top operational ships he had ever encountered, he could only think of one that was not extremely clean.

As trite as the expression "first impressions are lasting impressions" may be, it holds true for almost all the officers we interviewed. Most of them start building their impression of a ship the moment they set foot on the quarterdeck, which, on the best ships, is normally an impressive looking area, manned by sharp looking and attentive watchstanders. They continue to build upon their impression of the ship as they are escorted to and from various spaces. A commodore, with forty years of naval experience said he could tell what a ship is like by walking from the quarterdeck to the wardroom. He was dead serious. Specifically, he sizes up the ship by its outward appearance and the appearance of the quarterdeck area, the passageways, and the mess specialist on duty in the wardroom.

Speaking of the wardroom, a number of senior officers indicated its appearance says a lot about the ship. One commodore was especially impressed by the manner in which one of his top ships had redone its wardroom to give it a "pub type" atmosphere. The commodore felt this was innovative and effective because, with such a fine wardroom, the officers would be more likely to frequent it. This would lead to a stronger sense of unity among the officers.

Another commodore said he examined the wardroom for some tangible evidence that officer qualifications were recognized, such as a board on the bulkhead with the names of qualified surface warfare officers. Such trademarks tended to show up on excellent ships but not on others.

Putting forth the extra effort that reflects special attention to detail in the appearance of shipboard spaces is also a mark of excellence. In talking about one of his favorite ships, a commodore said he was most impressed not only by the cleanliness of the engineering spaces, but also by the extra effort the engineers took to make their spaces look sharp. Polishing bright work was considered indicative of pride in their spaces. Another example that comes to mind occurred just before we began an interview with an embarked commodore. As the chief staff officer escorted us from the quarterdeck to the commodore's office, he pointed with admiration to the shining decks and the wire brushed rungs on one of the ladders we had to climb. There is no doubt that senior officers really do notice when ships put forth the extra effort to make their ship shine.

#### B. IT'S MY SHIP!

The attitude displayed by shipboard personnel is considered a very important indication of excellence. On the best ships virtually all hands have a positive view of themselves, their duties, their commanding officer, and their ship. But how do senior officers go about sizing up a crew's attitude? There are a variety of ways. One is to listen to the line of thought running through the questions and comments made by shipboard personnel when they have discussions with the senior officer. For example, a rear admiral finds that on the best ships the atmosphere during discussion sessions tends to be more congenial and the

subject matter more broad than that which he hears on other ships. He doesn't hear a lot of people "grinding axes."

Other officers indicated that a positive crew attitude is demonstrated by crewmen who don't look the other way or avoid encounters with senior officers such as the commodore when he appears on scene. Instead, they appear to enjoy meeting the commodore and telling him about their gear and their ship. One commodore said he gets a general impression of crew attitude by walking around a ship and noting how crew members respond when he appears. A positive attitude is exemplified by crew members and junior officers who look him straight in the eye as he passes. Poor attitude is exemplified by those who avoid him.

An attitude of ownership tends to pervade the excellent ships. Personnel at all levels of the command talk with pride about "my ship," "my space," or "my job." On these ships, you are more likely to hear a chief saying things like "my MPA" rather than "the MPA" when referring to his division officer.

Most senior officers also find that a professional, businesslike attitude is a hallmark of excellence. Take the underway bridge watch, for example. In stressing the importance of a formal and professional watch, a commodore asked, "Does the officer of the deck say 'Hey Frank. Check the starboard pelorus.' or does he say 'Mr Smith! Check the starboard pelorus!'" Other officers stressed that a professional attitude is manifested in the way day-to-day work is undertaken. When visiting excellent ships, they can sense that productive, purposeful work is in progress. By this they meant that the best ships have officers and crewmen that are hard at work during working hours, even if it's the duty section on a Saturday in port, and they are working to a plan.

These officers read a lot from the chiefs' attitude. On excellent ships, they see a positive attitude being displayed by chief petty officers. The chiefs assume their proper role, meaning they are very much involved in the management of the ship. For example, a commodore mentioned that on his best ships the chiefs were very visible in the working spaces. He also noted that the chiefs, although present, were not the ones doing the hands on work. Instead they were supervising and instructing junior personnel.

Finally, crews of excellent ships demonstrate a positive, "can do" attitude which is reflected in a greater degree of support for the command than usually found on ships. One officer reflected on the most impressive examples of "can do," and he cited the example of an aircraft carrier in which seventy six restrictive deficiencies were identified during the first day of an Operational Propulsion Plant Examination. This crew viewed the inspectors as their enemy and there was no way they were going to be bested. They worked through the night and by the time the inspection team returned the next day, the crew had not only corrected every one of the deficiencies, they also had identified and corrected numerous other discrepancies that the inspection party had not noticed. This kind of effort convinced the commodore he was dealing with an unusually fine crew. A commodore told us how impressed he was with a ship in the squadron that had been tasked on short notice with taking over the deployment of another ship which was experiencing material problems. At first the commodore was concerned that this tasking would have a devastating effect on the morale of the crew which had returned recently from a six month deployment. However, it didn't. Morale remained high throughout the deployment and the ship performed in an exemplary manner. This same ship also received a surprise OPPE enroute to the short notice deployment. Again the ship



excelled, passing the inspection with flying colors. She seemed to take everything in stride. All the commodore saw from this ship was "can do," and it was not just the captain who was a "can doer," it was also his crew. The commodore was not certain why this ship had such a positive attitude, but he was very impressed with what he saw. Sometimes little things told senior officers a lot about a ship. A commodore described the attitude of the crew on one of his very best ships. When inspectors detected a leaking valve during an INSURV inspection, the petty officer with the inspectors had the valve tagged immediately for repair. His taking the initiative was in keeping with the actions of all the other personnel in this engineering department. The crew seemed to be committed to doing well not because of the inspection, but because they had a broader "can do" attitude that guided their routine, day-to-day actions.

#### C. ATTENTION TO KEY PLAYERS AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between the commanding officer and executive officer is one that senior officers think is very important. However, there was little offered in the way of advice as to what to do when this relationship was not strong. Excellent ships invariably have a commanding officer and executive officer who relate well, trust each other, and have similar leadership styles. One admiral noted that in two of his four previous commands he and his executive officer did not have a good relationship and the command suffered as a result. Reflecting on the executive officer's relationship with his subordinates, the admiral added that the executive officer should never be the social equal of the department heads. There must be a barrier.

Discussing the importance of infusing trust into the commanding officer/executive officer relationship, a



commodore with forty years of naval experience said he was particularly impressed by one commanding officer in the squadron who had left his ship by helo one day, leaving the executive officer to bring the ship to port so that he (the commanding officer) could attend a meeting the commodore had called for all commanding officers in the squadron. Both the executive officer and the crew would know by such a bold step that the commanding officer truly trusted his executive officer.

A positive officer/chief petty officer relationship was mentioned repeatedly as being a key indicator of excellence. On the best ships, it is professional and respectful, but not "buddy-buddy." The chiefs and officers have mutual respect for each other and they work well together. The chiefs don't need or get a lot of "rudder orders" from the officers because they (the chiefs) take the initiative and plan and supervise their men's work. A commodore attributed one of the reasons his ships performed well to the chiefs on these ships who performed roles that were often performed by officers in other ships. Furthermore, the chiefs were part of the decision making process. This tended to get them more involved in the running of their ships with the result that their talents were more fully utilized.

Strong relationships on the best ships (such as between the commanding officer and crew, the officers and crew, and the commanding officer and officers) were also mentioned to a lesser extent by senior officers as items they keyed on when forming an opinion of a ship. Unity and teamwork are typically characteristic in each of these relationships on excellent ships. One commodore called it "unit integrity," a term he used to describe a pervasive feeling on the best ships wherein all individuals tend to feel they are an important part of the command.

## V. THE TRIED AND TRUE METHODS

So far, we have summarized what senior officers have said about external and waterfront indications of excellence. But how do they think the best ships are achieving excellence? Do they perceive a recipe for success being used by excellent ships? The senior officers we met were struck by both the similarities and differences they saw when they observed excellence in the Surface Navy. Styles varied immensely, but there were certain basics associated with excellence. These officers do not think there is any one best leadership style ("You have to go with what got you to your command"), nor do they think innovative leadership and management techniques are needed to operate a ship in an excellent manner. As one commodore put it, "All you have to do is do well those things that you have heard about all of your career." A staff officer's views were similar when he said, "A ship's ability to achieve excellence is based on its ability to use the 'tried and true methods' of leadership and management." But what are the tried and true methods which these officers saw as most critical towards achieving excellence? Some senior officers gave very specific examples of management techniques which they are convinced all excellent ships use. Others said they weren't certain how the best ships were being managed, but they offered up some of their opinions as to what they thought was fundamental in achieving excellence. In this portion of the paper we will summarize the management techniques, methods, and strategies which these senior officers think excellent ships are applying. As the reader will see, it quickly becomes obvious that they think excellence starts with the captain.

## A. THE CAPTAIN HAS A PHILOSOPHY

One point that was repeatedly emphasized during our interviews was that commanding officers of the best ships arrive on board with a "command philosophy" or a "game plan" of leadership and management for achieving excellence. All of the captains of the excellent ships the senior officers dealt with in the present or the past had their command philosophy fixed firmly in their minds prior to assuming command. Some of these senior officers felt that not all captains had well thought out command philosophies aimed at excellence. One officer commented that he was amazed to find that officers he interviewed for command qualification were frequently unable to talk about their command philosophy because they hadn't given it any thought.

No one command philosophy was thought to be the best. But it was clear that the captain should have a plan to lead and manage his ship and that he should be working continuously at implementing it. A commodore, for example, felt it was important that the captain have and promulgate his command philosophy both in writing and at frequent meetings with all levels of the chain of command. He suggested that the captain discuss elements of his philosophy with department heads at formal weekly meetings and with division officers and chiefs every other week. Having a philosophy was a starting point on the road to excellence, and getting this philosophy to every member of the crew was the next step.

Although they felt there is no one best way to lead, several did state that a consistently autocratic style would not lead to excellence. Such a style, it was felt, could bring about good short term performance but the ship's performance would decline in the long run. A dictatorial manner would eventually alienate a crew and without the support of the crew excellence could not be maintained.

## B. THE CAPTAIN IS OUT AND ABOUT

If there is one thing senior officers said that commanding officers of excellent ships avoid, it is staying tied to their stateroom. They think the best commanding officers routinely get around their ships to observe what is going on and keep in touch with the crew. Being out and about is one of the primary means effective commanding officers stay in tune with their crew. While making their rounds, these commanding officers are not meddling in the affairs of their crew. Rather, primarily they are demonstrating their interest in what their crewmembers are doing.

A commodore, whose comments were typical, said he saw commanding officers of excellent ships as being strong leaders who were active and involved. They insure they have a lot of interaction with the ship's officers and men. This high level of interaction hardly ever took on the trappings of micro-management, however.

## C. THESE ARE THE CAPTAIN'S STANDARDS

Senior officers feel very strongly that commanding officers of the best ships devote a lot of attention to and are extremely effective at setting standards and goals and communicating them to all hands.

In commenting on the importance of high standards in general, a staff officer said the captain should "preach his views on what he expects, regularly and continuously." The chief staff officer of a tactical amphibious squadron said he thought it was important that the captain communicate to the crew his standards "using all forms of communication," and the message should be "these are my standards." A commodore commented, "Tell them (the crew) what you want and you will be surprised. They will give it to you." During his previous ship command, he had gathered the crew



immediately after assuming command and told them the ship was the dirtiest he had ever seen and that he expected them to clean it up immediately. They did. The commodore said, "These guys just wanted to be told what to do." Another commodore said that having high standards was one of the key elements of shipboard leadership and management that set excellent commands apart from the rest. On excellent ships, he felt that the standards were higher across the board and their attainment of standards was not viewed as something that could be negotiated. Commanding officers of excellent ships did not take it for granted that people know what he expects of them. The captain must first tell them his standards and then, if need be, demand that they be met. He added that "The crew will do whatever you ask of them."

To achieve excellence, the link between standards and accountability had to be made known to every crewmember. In discussing the enforcement of standards, a commodore said that the captain "can't be a nice guy." When people do something wrong, they have to be told, and this starts with the captain pointing out errors when he sees them occur. This was not to say that the chain of command should be ignored, but it is important that the officers and men know that subpar performance will be noted and action will be taken to remedy any below standard recurrence.

#### **D. EVERYTHING IS PUSHED DOWNHILL**

Tasks are delegated to the maximum extent possible on the best ships. A staff officer summed up most senior officers' attitude towards delegation when he commented, "Pushing things downhill should become a way of life." On a typical excellent ship, delegation starts with the captain, who realizes he cannot do everything. The captain goes out of his way to let the executive officer make some of the



decisions that are traditionally made by the commanding officer. Such trust and delegation not only develops the executive officer, but it also pervades other senior-subordinate relationships from the department heads to the mess cooks. The net result is that almost everyone is growing professionally and becoming qualified for their next at sea assignment.

#### E. THEY IGNORE THE RIGHT THINGS

Senior officers stated repeatedly that the best ships recognize their limitations and live within them. They don't take on too much at one time nor do they try to do things they aren't capable of doing. In other words, they set priorities, have their subordinates do likewise, and act in accordance with their established priorities. When a commodore stated that the best ships work smarter not harder, he attributed the attainment of this primarily to the ability of these ships to plan and set proper priorities. Another commodore said that his best captains knew that they could not do everything that was required of them. They demonstrated an the ability to "know what is really important," and they were skilled at "selectively ignoring the right things." A third commodore said that there are a thousand things the commanding officer is responsible for, but only a handful he needs to keep on his mind all the time, examples being safety, CMS, disbursing, and nuclear matters. Yet another commodore said that top ships realize they cannot do everything. They make the effort to learn what the commodore expects of the ship, and they give it to him. They know what is important and have the ability to prioritize their work.

## F. THEY HAVE "GOOD" DISCIPLINE

There was nothing surprising or unique about what senior officers' views on discipline. However, they all mentioned the importance of discipline and stressed that it must be firm, fair, consistent, and speedily administered. As one staff officer put it, "Good ships have good discipline." Many senior officers did mention that they think the best ships try to reform problem sailors rather than just discharge them from the Navy. For example, one officer said he thought the best ships made an attempt to "turnaround" poor performers before initiating separation procedures. He did not think the top ships conducted massive house cleanings of poor performers.

## G. CHIEFS ASSUME THEIR PROPER ROLE

We've already mentioned that senior officers we interviewed find that, on excellent ships, the chief petty officers assume a greater role in the day-to-day management of their ships than on most other ships. How does the commanding officer get this high degree of commitment and involvement from the chiefs? The answer lies in the captain's actions aimed at elevating his chiefs to their "rightful" position of leadership. One way he does this is by going on record regarding his expectations of his chiefs. He tells them he realizes the importance of their experience and expertise, emphasizing that he expects them to be the backbone of the ship's leadership and that he wants them to be highly involved in all aspects of the ship's management. Another way the captain does this is by making certain the chiefs know he expects them to train junior officers, and by making certain the junior officers know that he expects them to work closely with their chiefs and to learn from them.

## H. THE CREW KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON

Senior officers said repeatedly that they think crews of the best ships are kept well informed of a broad range of information concerning their ship. This included not only being made aware of scheduled ship events, but also events impacting on the ship, and feedback from the captain on how well he thought the ship was doing. Excellent ships have excellent communications, and they don't assume that all that needs to be done to communicate effectively is to put the word out at officer's call and in the plan of the day. The key to excellent communications is the captain. He keeps the crew informed by using the ship's public announcing system (1MC), holding periodic meetings such as captain's call with it and most importantly by talking to individuals one-on-one during his daily tours of the ship.

A staff officer's comments on this subject were typical. He considered communication with the crew to be very important and stressed that the captain should personally talk to the crew regularly. This not only helped get the word out but it also had the secondary positive effect of allowing the crew to get to know the captain. A commodore said that keeping the crew informed on "how they are doing" was one of the captain's primary responsibilities and was key to having an effective command. He added that he thought it imperative that the commanding officer hold meetings with the crew on a regular basis.

## I. THEY CARE FOR THEIR PEOPLE

The importance of concern for the individual sailor was given much emphasis during the interviews and we heard many examples of ways in which this concern is demonstrated on excellent ships. One commodore stated he had concluded that excellent leaders were "tuned to people and their needs,"

and they were "in frequency and in harmony with the ship." The commodore implied that caring for people and being in touch with them were means needed to gain commitment of individual sailors to the goals of their command.

An officer described how concern for sailors was demonstrated on one of the better ships with which he was familiar. It was standard procedure that a new man's rack be made up and his name stenciled on both his rack and his locker before he was taken to his berthing compartment for the first time. This relatively insignificant act was felt to have a powerful impact on both newly reporting sailors and old hands. Among other things, it symbolized the command's concern for its personnel. Coupled with other acts aimed at demonstrating concern for the welfare of the crew, this ship had developed a highly committed crew.

Another hallmark of excellence is that the captain plays a major role in showing concern for people. One of the primary ways he does this is by recognizing good performance. In commenting on the best ship in his group, a group commander noted it had an exceptionally strong education program and many of her sailors received their high school diplomas while assigned to the ship. The captain of this ship went out of his way to recognize the accomplishments of his crew. He invited the commodore and other VIPs to award high school diplomas and to acknowledge other achievements. This appeared to have a very positive impact on the crew and was reflected in their extremely positive attitude.

In discussing another excellent ship, a commodore spoke very highly of the emphasis the commanding officer placed on recognizing those who had successfully completed their Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist qualification. Gaining the silver cutlasses meant a lot to both the recipients and the captain. The commanding officer made it a point to pin the silver cutlasses to his uniform on the day prior to a



formal ceremony at which the insignia was awarded. He did this to show every man in the crew that this accomplishment meant a lot to the captain. The commodore was very favorably impressed by the extra effort the captain had made to recognize the crew in this manner.

Excellent captains also are seen as showing concern for individuals by being fair, firm, and consistent in administering discipline. One commodore stated that when a man went to mast, it was important that his entire chain of command attend the mast and be prepared to provide frank and candid comments on the man's performance. The commodore stated that when he had command of a ship, he weighed the comments of the chain of command very carefully and was inclined to give a man a break when the man's superiors so recommended because of prior good performance. Alternatively, he would "hammer" an offender for a similar infraction when the chain of command indicated that he was not a good performer. This was a means he used as commanding officer to let the crew know that he would take care of the good personnel but would not put up with those who did not support the ship.

#### J. THEY PLAN AHEAD

The ability to look ahead, to develop a plan, and then to implement the plan was emphasized time and again by the officers we interviewed as a key to being an excellent ship. They believe the best ships prepare today for events that will take place months in the future. Rather than coming up with elaborate schemes for planning, excellent ships emphasize that planning should be done in a simple and straightforward manner. One commodore summed it up when he said that the best ships plan to achieve that which they want. He added that this was one way they work smarter, not harder.



Inspections were the primary area in which senior officers said good planning manifests itself. One officer said he believed that excellent ships did a much better job of planning and preparing for inspections. He noted that he never seemed to find poor inspection results on ships that had a commanding officer and department heads who had taken the time to meet with his inspection party personnel a couple of months before the inspection.

#### K. THEIR PROGRAMS ARE BETTER ACROSS THE BOARD

It was evident that the officers we interviewed think that excellent ships do a better job of managing shipboard programs than fleet average ships. As one commodore put it, "The programs of excellent ships are better across the board." Although all programs were considered important, zone inspections, Planned Maintenance System, Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist qualifications, "I" (Indoctrination) Division, and the Ombudsman program were mentioned most frequently.

In providing an example of how an effective equipment maintenance program improves the outcome of materiel inspections, a staff officer, who had previously been assigned as a materiel inspector, said he found that ships with aviator commanding officers tended to perform better on materiel inspections than those with surface warfare commanding officers who did not have previous engineering experience. He attributed this to the fact that the aviators have a built in respect for the Planned Maintenance System and that they saw the Engineering Operating Sequencing System (EOSS) as being similar to the Naval Aviation Training and Operations Procedures Standard (NATOPS).

## I. CN TC THE SHIPS

There you have it....the "tried and true methods" which senior officers mentioned most often when discussing "excellence in the Surface Navy." Combined with the "external" and "waterfront" indicators of excellence, one can gain an appreciation of how these senior officers judge their ships, and how they believe their top ships go about achieving excellence. Let us now go aboard six ships that these senior officers singled out for their excellence and see if there are any surprises.

## VI. ON THE DECK PLATES

Battle "E" winner, Marjorie Sterrett winner, Arleigh Burke winner, OPPE standout, top operator, inspection standout, high retainer, high morale, a captain who thinks the world of his crew and a crew that feels the same about their captain, chiefs running the ship and the officers managing their divisions and departments while growing professionally, pride in being not only the fightingest ship on the waterfront but also the cleanest. Seem the like the best of all worlds? Well, perhaps to the surprise of some, there are ships out there that have much of this look about them.

For our study of excellence in the Surface Navy, we wanted to interview a wide variety of senior surface force officers and to observe a diverse group of excellent surface force ships. Our interviews with senior officers included (1) amphibious and cruiser-destroyer group commanders, (2) amphibious, service force, and cruiser-destroyer squadron commanders, and (3) captains on the Atlantic and Pacific Surface Force type commands. Because of ship operating schedules we were unable to get as broad a range of surface force ships as we desired. However, we did end up with five different types of ships. Originally we selected the following ships to visit: two cruisers, one destroyer, two frigates, one amphibious transport dock, one amphibious assault ship, and one salvage ship. In selecting ships to interview, we used the following criteria: the number of officers recommending a given ship as excellent; the strength of the views of the senior officers recommending a specific ship; and the availability of the ship for our interviews. All of the ships selected were recommended by

at least twenty five percent of the senior officers we interviewed and some by over ninety percent. There were several ships strongly recommended for our project which could not be observed because of their being deployed. We conducted day long interviews on the eight ships that met our criteria. Subsequent to our interviews, we decided to drop two ships from our analysis, one frigate and the amphibious assault ship, because we concluded that we were not able to get adequate information from these ships.

We went aboard each ship at 0900 and conducted one hour individual interviews with the captain and the executive officer. Then we conducted one hour interviews with each of the following groups: two department heads, two to four division officers, four to twenty chiefs, ten to twenty E5's and E6's, and ten to twenty E4's and below.<sup>1</sup> During the interviews we were attempting to identify what each ship did that made it perform well, why the ship performed better than others, and how the ship went about conducting its business. However, we did not want to do this in such a way that our questions drove the answers, that is, we avoided questions that could be answered with a simple yes or no. We did not ask questions like "Is retention important on this ship?" Instead we asked open ended questions, questions that usually began with the words "what" and "how" with some "why" questions added after receiving answers to the "what" and "how" questions. For example, we would ask everyone we interviewed, "To what do you attribute the success of this ship?" and "How would you compare your ship's performance to the other ships in your squadron/homeport?" And after we got an answer we might add "Why do you think your ship is the best in the squadron?"

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<sup>1</sup>Summaries of all of our senior officer and ship interviews are on file at the Naval Postgraduate School.

In addition to using the 7S model (see the introduction to Part I for details of this model) to develop our questions, we also included questions relating to those categories senior officers discussed the most when we asked them for their views on excellence in the Surface Navy. These categories were departmental and battle efficiency awards, cleanliness/appearance of ship, appearance of crew, attitude of crew, role of captain, role of chiefs, commanding officer/executive officer relationship, retention, discipline, communications, task accomplishment, inspections, innovation, self-sufficiency, programs, and personnel.

Having completed our ship interviews, we needed to decide upon a method for providing the reader with our findings. When we started, we had hoped that we would be able to group the information in one or more of the currently popular models used to describe organizations, such as the 7S mentioned earlier; however, we found that such an approach, although appealing for its simplicity and neatness, tended to remove from our analysis the energy and personalities of the ships we visited, and it was these qualities that had impressed us the most. Therefore, we elected a less structured but, we hope, more interesting and enlightening approach to telling the story of these excellent ships. We chose to identify those qualities that the people on these ships felt contributed the most to their success.

After many false starts, the attributes that we ended up with as the best descriptors of these excellent ships were grouped into the following categories, each of which is amplified in the chapters that follow.

- Good ships getting better
- Pride in evidence at all levels
- Teamwork, not just a concept but a way of life
- The ship in automatic



- High energy level/bias towards action
- Presence of a common vision and shared values
- As the captain, so is the ship
- Sailors, our most important resource
- Oh yes, task accomplishment<sup>2</sup>

The story we want to tell is about excellent ships that in the past were good but are on their way to becoming great; ships that have crews that think of themselves as family and take great pride in themselves and their ships; ships that are well managed, possessing many of the qualities extolled in present day leadership and management literature, even though people are not sure why these attributes exist in their ship and not in others they have served in or known about; ships that know one thing for sure, their captain is the key to the success of their ship, not because he is so smart or works so hard but because he understands people and, to quote a frequently heard phrase, "because he acts like a human being"; and ships that view their success at getting the job done as almost an after thought, "We just

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<sup>2</sup>Peters and Waterman in their book, In Search of Excellence, use the following descriptive phrases to describe the basics of success they saw working in the excellent American business they studied: managing ambiguity and paradox, a bias for action, close to the customer, autonomy and entrepreneurship, productivity through people, hands-on/value-driven, stick to the knitting, and simple form/lean staff. Peters and Waterman's work provided us with the idea to attempt our study of excellence in the Surface Navy, and much of what they described as being at work in the successful American business also was observed by us on the decks and between the bulkheads of excellent U.S. Navy ships. Obviously, because of the different environments of business and defense, there were a lot of differences in the dynamics of ships as opposed to those in businesses; however, we were struck more by the similarities in our observations than the differences. Two of Peters and Waterman's attributes, a bias for action and productivity through people, were right on target with our observations, and we have used very similar descriptive phrases in our paper, high energy level/bias towards action and sailors - our most important resource. We commend the reading of In Search of Excellence to Navy leaders and managers. It is relevant to our profession. [Ref. 1]

try to excel at everything we do, and the tasks take care of themselves."

With one more repetition of the caveat that this is not our theory on how to achieve excellence in Navy ships, but just our description of what we saw on six ships that senior officers identified as being excellent, let us now go aboard and take a look at excellence in the Surface Navy.

## VII. GOOD SHIPS GETTING BETTER

According to the officers and enlisted personnel we interviewed, none of the ships we visited had made what might be called a miraculous turnaround in the recent past. That is, none of the ships had gone from "basket case" to top performer. Each of these ships had been at least average in the recent past (18 months to two years before the interview), and most of these ships had been top ships for several years, at a minimum. It was interesting to note how many of the senior enlisted personnel attributed the success of their ship to the fact that "Our ship has always been top notch, since the day she was commissioned." However, even though the ships were seen as having been good in the past, everyone we talked with thought the ships were on an upward performance trend. They saw their ship as being better today than a year ago, and they felt that the ship would be even better in the immediate future. The collective feeling of being on an upward performance trend even applied to a ship that a year before had won the Battenberg Trophy, for being the top ship in the fleet. The crew members who had been in this ship during the period it won the Battenberg Trophy stated that their winning the award was well deserved, but they were quick to add that they were a better ship today than when they had been recognized as being the best. Although there was no doubt in the minds of the people on these ships that they were superstars, it was interesting to observe that many personnel, especially the junior officers and junior enlisted men, did not have strong opinions as to why their ship was so good and getting better, they just knew that it was.

Occasionally we would hear a negative comment about a specific aspect of the management of one of these ships (they were excellent ships, not perfect), but what impressed us was that people noting a problem were usually optimistic about the chances of the stated problem being corrected. If an officer commented that the ship did not have as good a Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) or Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) program as he thought it should have, he would usually follow up with a comment that the problem with the program was appreciated and action was being taken to rectify the situation.

We frequently heard, especially when talking to the chiefs, that their ship's top performing reputation drew good people to the command like a powerful magnet, making being a good ship getting better a little easier to achieve than one might think. We met several chiefs and first and second class petty officers who told us that they had lobbied to get orders to their ship because they had wanted to be on a ship with a great reputation. We also met one commanding officer who said that he attempted, on occasion, to recruit top senior enlisted personnel to his ship, and he found this was not difficult to do because of the ship's fine reputation. To this captain, the appeal of being on a winner was very strong, especially for junior officers and junior enlisted personnel. He noted that young men did not join the Navy to be average. As he put it, to these young men "Being average stinks! They want to stick out." Being on a top ship gave them the chance to stand out from the herd.

Another benefit of being good which made remaining on top a little easier was that the commodores, group commanders, and their staffs tended to leave these ships alone. In general, the officers and enlisted personnel were neutral regarding the staff. The few who did have opinions

of the staffs usually had good words for them. The staff was not seen as the enemy, but more like a distant rich uncle who could be of help when needed and who did not stick his nose where it was not needed. Two of the ships we interviewed spent a lot of time serving as flag ships. Obviously, they had a close relationship with the staff. However, their attitude towards the staff was still positive. This had not happened automatically, but it had happened.

Much of what follows in the next eight chapters gets into the how and the why these ships were good and getting better. But before moving on, it is worth noting that when we asked people on these ships how good were they, the answer was invariably, "We are the best." However, when we asked them why they were good or what it was that they did that made them good, the answers covered the waterfront, and sometimes the answer was not known, especially among the junior officers and junior enlisted personnel. However, when we departed each of these ships, having spent six hours on them talking with personnel at all levels of the chain of command, we felt that we had some good ideas regarding the causes of their success. Read on if you are interested in the look of excellence and some of its causes.



### VIII. PRIDE IN EVIDENCE AT ALL LEVELS

The amount of pride the officers and men of these ships had in their ships was truly amazing. Nearly everyone, officer and enlisted, felt that his ship was the best, and they were proud and anxious to tell us that this was the way they felt. When asked how they saw themselves relative to the other ships in their squadron, the people we interviewed, especially the chiefs and junior enlisted personnel, typically would get on the front of their seats and proclaim "There is no doubt about it. We are the best ship in the squadron!" Over and over again we heard junior enlisted, senior enlisted, and officers saying things like "If there is a war tomorrow, this is the ship I want to be on," or "There is not another ship in my homeport that I would rather be on." On two of these ships, we interviewed approximately fifty officers and enlisted personnel, and we did not come across a single person who did not think that his ship was not only the best one in the fleet but also the best one with which he had ever come in contact. The old refrain that the best command is either the one you just came from or the one you are going to was not the case for these officers and enlisted men. To these men, they had found the best command, and we were standing on it. The comments of the chiefs regarding the relative excellence of their present command and their previous commands was especially telling, for the chiefs had numerous ships to compare their present one against. But, even with the chiefs, their conclusion was the same as that of the boot junior officers or seamen, "This is the best ship."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>In the introduction to the third edition of Command at Sea, Admiral John S. McCain, Jr. stated that "Pride,

The captains were also proud of their ships, although their pride was a lot more reserved and tempered with rational explanations of how their ship achieved its outstanding performance. The captains' pride often seemed a very personal thing, similar to the pride seen in a parent describing a highly successful son or daughter. Some of the captains were excited about the prospect of letting us know how they operated, and others were rather restrained, but all of them did feel that we had come to the right place to study excellence in the Surface Navy.

#### A. THE POWER OF RECOGNIZING GOOD PERFORMANCE

Why were the people on these ships so proud of their ship and their membership in the crew? Was enhancing crew pride a goal of these commands? If so, how was increased pride achieved? We asked these questions a lot, and we concluded that although pride had a lot to do with passing inspections and meeting operational commitments, there was more to it. Simple, garden variety recognition of good performance probably had more to do with the pride observed on these ships than any other management or leadership technique. Although usually not a stated goal of the commanding officers, recognition of good performance was used on these ships as a means of empowering subordinates and gaining their commitment to command goals. On one ship, the CO would give a dinner party on board the ship for new personnel and their families. Before the dinner, he would learn something about each new man in attendance, and at the dinner he would introduce each new man to the people at the table, making sure that his remarks contained a personal

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loyalty, and discipline are the by-products stemming from the proper exercise of command leadership." What we saw in these excellent ships only lends support to his statement. Pride is mentioned here, and as the reader will discover, discipline and loyalty flourished on these ships. [Ref. 2]

touch. The executive officer who related this to us noted that he could see that the people attending the dinner truly appreciated the fact that they were being welcomed in such a unique manner and that they were being recognized as important individuals by the captain. They invariably felt good about themselves and their new home. On another ship, the captain went out of his way to insure that his crew received recognition as a group and as individuals. After a lot of politicking, he was able to arrange for his sailor of the quarter to be recognized not only by himself but also by a nearby Navy League. The sailor of the quarter and his wife were treated to an expense free weekend at a plush resort compliments of this Navy League chapter. The captain noted that not only was this sailor of the quarter impressed and motivated by the recognition, attention, and treatment he received, but the rest of the crew appreciated what was being done for one of their own. They were proud to be on a ship where individual excellence received this type of special recognition.

## B. ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE

Accentuating the positive was a powerful theme observed on many of these ships. One captain went as far as to tell his officers and chiefs that for every man who was disciplined, at least ten would be commended. This was not used as an inflexible rule that sent the executive officer out after every captain's mast looking for "good guys" to fulfill a ten to one rule, rather it was made part of the command climate on this ship. The officers and senior enlisted personnel had been converted to the captain's way of thinking. They gave recognition and recommended personnel for command recognition, not because of some dictum from on high, but because they had seen how powerful

a motivator recognition of good performance could be, and they wanted to use it to spur their personnel to even greater commitment and accomplishment. An officer on this ship proudly related the ten to one rule to us as requiring thirty commendations for every reprimand. Apparently he had not only internalized his captain's thinking, he had expanded upon it.

On the majority of these ships, it was evident that the sequence of getting tasks done started first with gaining individual commitment to the general goals and processes of the command. Once commitment was achieved, accomplishment invariably followed. There was one ship in the group that downplayed the importance of focusing on enhancing commitment. On this ship, commitment was treated as a given and when it was lacking it was achieved through edict. "You just have to demand that people do their job" was the way several officers put it. But, even on this ship, recognition of good performance occurred a lot.

These ships cultivated pride as a farmer might cultivate his crops, and recognition of good performance was one of the key ingredients used to raise an individual's image of himself and his ship. "When we do a good job, we get told that we have done well," and statements similar to this were heard repeatedly on these ships, especially, but not exclusively, at the junior enlisted level. Although recognition of superior performance was used a lot on these ships, the crews felt that the recognition they received was hard earned and well deserved, and not given out just to try and squeeze a little more work out of a person. There seemed to be a fine line between giving recognition when it was due, and giving it unselectively and excessively. On one ship, we heard the comment several times that a previous commanding officer had given more recognition than the present captain, but the recognition from the incumbent



captain did more to motivate the crew because they realized that when this captain recognized someone, it was well deserved.

Recognition was not the sole purview of the captain on these ships. It was used by many levels. The chiefs, in general, seemed concerned especially with recognizing their subordinates when they performed well. On one ship, for example, when VIPs would visit the extremely impressive firerooms, the chief in charge made certain that his personnel appreciated the fact that they were being given a compliment for their efforts just by the fact that the VIPs were there. Additionally, this chief stated that he went out of his way to recognize his personnel when they performed well, which meant that he spent a lot of time giving a lot of recognition.

In addition to verbal recognition, many of the chiefs we met used more tangible forms of recognition, mainly the granting of time off for jobs well done. On most of these ships, the chiefs controlled liberty, which gave them the power to back up their words of praise with action. (Even on excellent ships, the sailors like their liberty.) Furthermore, on these ships, the sailors saw the linkage between effort expended and reward, e.g., liberty, medals, and letters of commendation. Talking to a W4 bosun on one of the ships we visited, we heard that relatively late in his professional life he learned the importance and power of recognizing good performance. Whereas in the past he might not have recognized a job well done because he thought everyone was expected to perform well, he now took the time to give recognition. He said that his change of views regarding recognition resulted from his realizing how good he felt in his last job when he was commended for doing well. This happened a lot in his previous job (getting commended and feeling good because of it), and he said that



it spurred him on to even better performance. He now saw it as his duty to recognize his subordinates' good performance. For example, after a recent long and difficult deck evolution, the first thing he did after securing was to go below and draft letters of commendation for his subordinates who had performed in an exemplary manner during the evolution. Talking with men from all levels of the chain of command on this ship and with men from all the ships we visited, we were struck by the impact recognition of good performance had had on them. Even though they felt they were the best, they still were motivated by hearing from their superiors that their efforts were known and appreciated.

Another aspect of recognition that manifested itself on these ships was that the recognition tended to be done immediately or very soon after the act that warranted the recognition. Monthly awards ceremonies were held on these ships, but initial recognition was not delayed until the ceremony. The captain would get on the 1MC and let the crew know what Petty Officer Jones did the moment his accomplishments were appreciated.\*

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\*Elanchard in his best selling book, The One Minute Manager, emphasizes the importance of identifying and recognizing good performance. He considers recognition, "one minute praising" is his more descriptive phrase, as one of the members of a triad for effective management at the working level. The other two members of the triad are "one minute reprimanding" and "one minute goal setting." [Ref. 3]

## IX. TEAMWORK NOT JUST A CONCEPT BUT A WAY OF LIFE

### A. LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

Although usually not an expressed goal of the captain or the officers and chiefs of these excellent ships, teamwork was pervasive on all of these ships, especially among the chiefs, the department heads and the junior enlisted personnel. We repeatedly heard comments similar to one E5 saying, "If I need some help, I can go right to the person who is responsible, and nine out of ten times he will stop what he is doing and help me out."

On another ship, we heard at every level of the command that teamwork was outstanding on the ship, and that every major evolution was approached as a team effort. The term these officers and men used for their form of teamwork was "group grabble." This meant to them that whenever there was a big job for the ship to do everyone was expected to do his part. When the ship had a major seamanship evolution that required people to help out with pulling cables and providing their brawn, everyone turned out without the khaki ever having to resort to the chain of command. People just felt that it was their responsibility to lend a hand. When this same ship had her OPPE, tiger teams of non-engineering department personnel were formed and stationed on the mess decks to respond in any way they could. Again, they were willing to help out their shipmates. If that meant that a radicman went into the bilges to clean an oil spill during the OPPE, so be it. On another ship we visited, the department heads recollected a recent evolution that to them personified the crew's attitude towards teamwork. The ship had just returned from a month at sea on a Friday afternoon,

and a twenty man working party was required to load stores. The department heads were concerned that it would be difficult to get personnel for the evolution since everyone not in the duty section would want to hit the beach. To their surprise, they ended up with twice as many people as were needed for the evolution, and the attitude of the crew was "Let's all pitch in and get this over so that everyone can hit the beach." As the department heads watched this evolution, it dawned on them that the team spirit they were witnessing was really what separated this ship from others in which they had served, and it was this sense of family that, perhaps more than any other factor, caused this ship to be the best ship with which they had ever been associated.

Supporting our impression of the importance and power of the sense of teamwork on some of these ships was the frequency with which we heard personnel from one department offer unsolicited praise of personnel from a different department. This happened with the department heads, the division officers, the chiefs, the first class, and the junior enlisted. Frequently the supply departments on these ships were cited by engineers, operators, and weaponeers for the outstanding service they provided in such things as supply support and crew care, e.g., cooking and laundry services. The supply officers on all of these ships were held in high esteem by their fellow department heads. There were a lot of blue E's on these ships, but when asked to describe the supply officer, we heard comments like, "He stresses service to the ship far ahead of doing whatever it takes to please supply inspectors and win supply E's." On one ship, a hero of the crew was a mess specialist (MS) who had served on the ship for over ten years. He was something of a folk hero. When underway, he worked around the clock. The crew saw him as being driven by a desire to provide the

crew the best food and service possible. People laughed and shook their heads in agreement and amazement as one sailor told us that this MS did not even have a bunk. He just worked until he dropped, and wherever that was he rested until he was ready to work some more. His sacrifice and dedication did a lot to motivate others on this ship to give extra of themselves and to draw other crew members into the powerful sense of family that existed in this ship.

In addition to having a high opinion of their shipmates in general, the personnel on these ships respected and trusted their shipmates. When asked if there was much theft or vandalism on their ship, the sailors made statements that indicated they were unfamiliar with what other ships in the fleet are like. The younger sailors of these ships had difficulty believing that there are ships that have problems with theft and vandalism. Families did not inflict such pains on themselves.

Perhaps these examples were not that atypical of those found on fleet average ships, but what impressed us about these stories was the fact that they meant something special to the people on these ships. They served as examples of the way these ships did business, not as one of occurrences that left people wondering what got into the crew. The air of teamwork that permeated these ships seemed to take on almost mystical proportions. People enjoyed and appreciated the fact that on this ship the level of cooperation and teamwork was something special, and they wanted to do their part to make this positive quality a permanent part of the command fabric. They were not inclined to sit back and just take advantage of the sense of teamwork that did exist, they wanted to contribute to this positive atmosphere and pass it on to future crew members.



## B. IT STARTS WITH ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIPS

One-on-one personal relations on these ships also showed evidence of the importance of teamwork and cooperation to overall performance. For example, we did not come across a single example of one department head not getting along with one of his peers. At first we thought we might be getting "fed a line" when the department heads told us of how well they got along with each other, but, as we talked to other officers and enlisted personnel, we heard unsolicited comments about the close cooperation and rapport that existed between the department heads and what a positive impact this had on their command. Somehow, these department heads had dealt successfully with the issue of career competition with their peers. Also, all of these captains felt that they got along well with their executive officers, and the executive officers felt just as positive about their relations with their captains. The captain and the executive officer were not necessarily the best of friends, but there was a mutual respect between these officers. Furthermore, when the captain and the executive officer of these ships had problems with their officers and enlisted personnel, the general feeling among subordinates was that the problems were dealt with in a professional and non-personal manner. Actions, not personalities, tended to be the focus of criticism.

The junior enlisted were especially impressed by the amount of cooperation that existed on their ships. They usually said that they did not know why everyone tended to cooperate, but they added that they were convinced that the high level of cooperation was a major, if not the major, contributor to the success of the ship. The teamwork that did exist seemed to cut across peer and working groups. The officers got along well with the chiefs, the chiefs thought



highly of the officers, the junior enlisted thought that their LPCs were good, etc., etc. As one E3 put it, on his ship there was no prejudice. He was not talking about race prejudice; he was talking about prejudice towards junior personnel by senior personnel. On his ship, as he saw it, his feelings were treated as if they were important, just as important as those of his superiors. This sailor was mess cooking at the time we interviewed him, and he had no misconceptions about who ran the ship and who made the decisions. He knew that this was the responsibility of his seniors, but he was impressed by the fact that the people who had the responsibility for running the ship also had the ability to appreciate that his feelings were just as important to him as theirs were to them. When this sailor was making his point he was in a group of fifteen E4's and E3's, and, to a man, they nodded in agreement as the sailor spoke. As we interviewed these young sailors, the command master chief sat off to one side unobtrusively listening to what we were being told. We could tell that he was proud of what was being said. He had let us know before the group interview that the ship was good and that the crew was turned on; yet, we could tell that every time he saw the manifestations of commitment and cooperation from the crew he got a warm feeling in the pit of his stomach. We were impressed also.

### C. TEAM AT THE TOP

On many of these ships the collaboration between the department heads, division officers, and chiefs with the captain was very strong. Rather than operating as distinct camps with similar goals of excellence, these groups and individuals worked as an entity, as a team, with the captain in charge, but also with the captain seen as a member of the

team. The captain was perceived as being sharp and professional and in some cases extremely knowledgeable, but, more importantly to his subordinates, he was also perceived as being approachable and open to suggestions. Furthermore, the captain was viewed as willing to change his mind when one of the other team members had a better way of approaching a problem. The officers and chiefs on these ships responded very positively to their captain's being approachable. They were not familiar with the captain, but they were eager to share their views with him. On these ships, with one exception, the captain did not do anything that he considered out of the ordinary to develop this sense of teamwork at the top, but upon reflection most of the captains did note that they had let it be known that they did not want to be surrounded by a bunch of "yes men," and they somehow were able to convince their subordinates that they were sincere regarding this pronouncement.

On one of the ships, however, the captain took a very proactive approach to developing teamwork among the khaki. He told us proudly that he could not stand "yes men" and to get this point across to his officers and chiefs he periodically would make statements that were diametrically opposed to his true beliefs just to see if the officers and chiefs would call him on these bogus remarks. If they did not, he would give them both barrels, and chastise them for not having the confidence and energy to note the folly of what he was saying. This captain added that it was very easy as a captain to fall into the trap of believing you are always right and to start thinking too much of your own ability and opinions. He felt that he had to be constantly on his guard against deceiving himself, and that he had to convince his subordinates through his words and actions that it was important for him and the ship that he not be allowed to live in a fool's paradise. The honest inputs of everyone

were considered crucial in the quest for excellence, not the dishonest agreeing "aye, aye, sirs" of subordinates afraid and/or unwilling to tell the captain when he was heading in the wrong direction. That is not to say that a form of participative management existed in this ship that had every man telling his superiors his every feeling about every decision. It did not. Yet, the prevailing feeling was that on matters of importance juniors could and were expected to offer opinions at odds with their superiors without being considered disloyal. Such opinions were not given with great frequency, but the fact that the juniors knew that they could be given meant a lot to these people and enhanced their feeling of attachment to their ship.

#### D. FOR THE NON-TEAM PLAYER, STRIKE TWO, YOU'RE OUT

As mentioned earlier in this section, teamwork was usually not seen as an end in itself or even as a command goal, but on one ship, the captain elevated teamwork to very near the top of his priority list within the first week of his joining. He gathered the crew together on the flight deck for his first of many captain's calls, and he told them something like this. The ship was not the best ship in the squadron, but it could be and would be. He told them that to be the best was not hard; all it took was commitment to be the best and some hard work. He added that if they gave him what he asked, the ship would become the best ship in the fleet, adding that although this would require a lot of hard work, it would be a lot of fun and very rewarding. After he gave this speech, the commanding officer told the crew that he only wanted people on board who were committed to his plan. He then told them that if they personally did not feel committed they should walk to the other side of the flight deck and he would send them to another command. Some

took him up on this. They were off the ship within a week. In addition to getting rid of those who said that they did not want to be "on the team," this commanding officer got rid of a lot of poor performers during the first week of his command. The commanding officer said that he sent twenty six personnel home during his first week command. Several other captains related that they had separated a lot of poor performers in the past year. The great majority of the people we talked with supported their command's efforts to get rid of poor performers. We frequently heard E3's and E4's laud their command's efforts at getting rid of people who did not want to perform or be on their ship. When we asked what was done with personnel who did not fit into the team, the answer was usually, "They are not around long." Although malcontents and poor performers were not removed just because they were not team players, they were removed (if they did not change their ways), and this had a positive impact on the level of cooperation and teamwork on these ships. Enhanced teamwork was viewed as a side benefit of a policy to get rid of dead wood, but its benefits to the ship were considered significant. We did not hear the old saw that ninety percent of the time was being spent with ten percent of the problem personnel. The bottom ten percent appeared to be constantly under the gun, and if they did not modify their behavior relatively quickly, they were gone. Each of the ships differed on how hard and how long they would work to get an individual to modify his ways, but all of them had a breaking point which, when reached, resulted in the departure of the poor performer, and it appeared that

the breaking point was not that high. On one ship this was summarized as follows: "You get one strike, but on strike two you are out."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>For an in depth discussion of the causes and values of teamwork in organizations, the reader is referred to Chester I. Barnard's The Functions of the Executive. [Ref. 4]



## X. THE SHIP IN AUTOMATIC

Although one could sense a high energy level on these ships at all levels, there did not appear to be a lot of wasted effort. There was little work for work's sake. The ships were in an efficient routine that everyone understood and supported. Crisis management was the exception rather than the norm, especially internally generated crisis management. These ships had their fair share of short fused problems to deal with, but usually these were considered the result of someone off the ship putting a short leadtime demand upon the ship. Although the Ship's Organization and Regulation Manual (SORM) was not a vital document used in the day-to-day management of all of the ships (only one of these ships used the SORM on an almost daily basis), the concept of having "a way to do" various evolutions did exist. With only a few exceptions, the officers and enlisted personnel on these ships did not feel that they were working harder or longer hours than their counterparts across the pier, and they did not feel that their shipmates were above average in intellect or technical ability. Rather, they felt that they were operating more efficiently and getting more out of their men and themselves than other ships.

The wheel was not being reinvented with great regularity on these ships. There seemed to be time for everything, including personal matters and crew recreation. Time management was not stressed, but it appeared that there was a good balance between undertaking short range, not so important, urgent items and the not so urgent, longer range, very important items. The important did not habitually lose to the urgent.

## A. THE SHIP DRIVING PROGRAMS, AND NOT PROGRAMS DRIVING THE SHIP

It seemed that all of the various programs that the shore establishment levied on these ships were being complied with and given more or less the attention that the "powers that be" thought each of these programs should get. This is not to say that all programs were, in fact, given equal emphasis, but the officers and enlisted personnel felt that none of the programs was being given just lip service. We heard very few complaints about "such and such a program" not being alive and well. We asked all of these captains which programs they gave the least attention to, and the answer was usually that all programs were given attention. We thought we might find that some of the commanding officers made a conscious decision to downplay certain programs, but this was not the case. One captain's comment, "I cannot think of any programs that we are supposed to be doing that we are not," was typical of what we heard. Furthermore, the programs on these ships were not seen as empires unto themselves. Instead, they were seen as parts that fit into an integrated whole. The purposes behind the programs were known, and they fit into the ships' purposes, as the ships had identified them for themselves. How they fit into the big picture is discussed in the following chapter. Here we will discuss the programs that were emphasized on these excellent ships.

## B. THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, BATTLE READINESS

All of these ships had time for training and they did a lot of it. On the average, these ships devoted three hours each week to on ship training for both the officers and the enlisted personnel. Frequently we heard enlisted personnel praising the training they were receiving. Chiefs would

say, "This is the first ship that I have ever been on that actually conducted training as it should be." There was a lot of concern with broadening individuals' knowledge of not only their rating but also their ship and the contributions of their shipmates. In general, the Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) program received a lot of attention. (It was interesting to note that although all of the ships had active ESWS programs, the vast majority of the personnel we talked with felt that more could be done in this area. They saw the benefits of the program and they wanted to get as much from the program as possible.) Off ship training was also stressed on these ships. The general feeling expressed by supervisors was that people had to learn their jobs to be effective, and if this required others to work a little harder and longer to compensate for the absence of a shipmate off at school, so be it. The ship and the individual would benefit in the long run. Once again, there was a lot of attention on long run benefits, even at the expense of short run hardships. The captains were the ones requiring that training and professional growth be kept high on their ships' priority lists, but they appeared to have the total support of their subordinates. Apparently, the benefits of training had made themselves apparent to these crews.

We came across numerous examples of these ships emphasizing enhanced battle readiness through individual growth, but none more telling than on the ship that conducted its annual naval gunfire support qualification using members of the "second team" on the computer consoles. As all cruiser-destroyermen know, this is an important qualification and the scores on this exercise receive a lot of scrutiny from superiors, but to the captain of this ship and to his crew, the scores were secondary to training the personnel who needed the training the most. As one department head put

it, "When we are off of Lebanon and standing condition III watches, it very likely will be one of the junior men sitting on the gunfire console who will have to perform. We knew our first team could do their jobs well, and we knew that the second and third teams needed the practice the most. Therefore, the second and third teams were the ones who got the training when we fired for qualification. For sure the first team was standing over the shoulders of the less experienced personnel, but when it was over, the younger men knew that they had the ability to do their job." This ship was driven not only by a desire to excel but also by a vision of battle readiness being the standard by which excelling ultimately would be judged. Therefore, lower scores on an exercise could and had to be tolerated in order to enhance the ship's battle readiness. This example is given not because it is representative of how the other excellent ships approached exercises, but because it is typical of the importance they attached to training the entire ship and not just a chosen few and the demonstrated devotion to training and its long term benefits towards personal growth. All of these ships targeted their training programs at battle readiness. Only the direction from which they fired differed.

One captain who put a very high priority on training recounted that when he took command, the ship did not have an effective training program. He realized the inadequacy of the training program during the first week he was on board. He immediately made one of only two edicts he remembered making in his entire command tour. He mandated that training be conducted for the first hour of every Tuesday and Thursday. He said that if he heard a chipping hammer during either of these training periods, he would go berserk. As he was walking around the ship daily, he would ask crew members about their training. Originally he got



feedback from the crew that the training was not good. The captain then went to the executive officer and told him that his training program wasn't hacking it. The executive officer squared away the program and it was very good from then on. This commanding officer also pushed off-ship training. He said that the off-ship training schedule was one of the few pieces of paper that he paid attention to. Again, when he walked around the ship, he would ask the sailors what training they had scheduled in the future. He was looking to see that there was some direction and perceived personal growth. It was the department heads' and division officers' responsibility to insure that such direction existed.

Training was one of another captain's top priorities, and he was very proud of his existing training program. He claimed it was second to none. Officers trained daily. The ship used an available classroom at the head of the pier to do a lot of training. The captain was surprised how few other ships availed themselves of this valuable training location. Several times during our interview he asserted, "We really push training." He noted that meaningful training was hard to do, but that it must be strived for continuously. He had a lot of interest in ESWS, and he was proud of the ship's program. He added, however, that the number of qualified personnel was not that high. His sailors also shared his interest and liking for the ESWS program, as well as the captain's belief that more could be done with the ship's program than was being done currently. However, both the captain and the crew felt that the program was heading in the right direction and that it would continue to improve. This was just one of several examples of less than excellent programs being viewed positively by the crews of these ships because they were pleased with the direction the programs were heading. There was an optimism



and a confidence in the system; once identified, problems would be solved.

### C. IT NOT ONLY WORKS, IT LOOKS GOOD

These excellent ships were very clean and well preserved and the crews took pride in this. However, they did not feel that they were having to go to superhuman efforts or spend an inordinate amount of time to achieve the sharp internal and external appearance of their ships. In general, everyone knew his job, and everyone was doing his job (or being taken to task when he was not doing his job), and that was about all the people we met felt it took to get the job done in a professional, non-crisis manner.

Zone inspections were a vital and effective program on all of these ships. Several captains and members of their crews attributed much of the overall improvements in the effectiveness of their ship to the captain initiating an effective zone inspection program. Every captain actively participated in his zone inspection program. On some of the ships the captain would be the only one who conducted zone inspections. On others, the executive officer and department heads might also participate, but on none of the ships did the captain delegate his responsibility for personally inspecting.

Many of the crew thought of and talked of the zone inspection program as not just another ship's program, but as their captain's zone inspection program. It was one of the more effective ways these captains communicated their standards and expectations to their crews, and the crews appreciated their captain personally passing on this information to them. One captain related that he started stressing his zone inspection program the week he took command. He used the zone inspection as a means of setting

and raising standards of cleanliness, material readiness, and management. He noted that it took a lot of his time (two zone inspections per week for the first six months of this captain's command tour) and energy to implement the zone inspection program as he felt was required ("I had to work like a dog"), but he was convinced that his efforts had been well rewarded in terms of enhanced material readiness and cleanliness. Accountability was stressed during zone inspections. This was felt to be the key to making the program successful. The personnel presenting the spaces to the inspecting officers were required to know the status of discrepancies and to brief on what was being done to correct any discrepancies, and woe betide an individual and his supervisors if they were not up to this tasking.

The preventive maintenance programs on these ships received a lot of attention from all levels of the chain of command. The captains went out of their way to demonstrate their interest in this program. Some would include the checking of the PMS program as part of their zone inspections. Others would conduct spot checks of preventive maintenance checks. All insisted that their officers demonstrate a keen interest in the program. One captain noted that when he took command he would have his department heads personally brief him on all preventive maintenance checks that had not been completed during the previous week. He was surprised to find that the department heads did not have sound reasons as to why deferred checks had not been completed. Immediately he made it clear to his department heads that he expected one hundred percent PMS accomplishment, and, in the event this was not possible, the department head would be thoroughly familiar with the reason why a check had not been completed and what was being done to get it completed. This captain concluded by noting that after a couple of weeks the department heads and their personnel saw

the importance of giving PMS a great deal of attention and from then on PMS was more or less put in automatic. On several ships we heard people proudly state that one hundred percent PMS accomplishment was expected of them and their work centers. Working weekends to get caught up on PMS was a norm on many of these ships, a norm that was accepted by the crew as being part of what it took to be the best.

#### I. BRINGING THEM INTO THE FOLD

Although these ships were in many ways in automatic, they did not rely solely upon the ship's positive momentum rubbing off on new personnel to inculcate in the new men the ship's emphasis on achieving excellence. They gave a lot of attention to indoctrinating new personnel and to telling them that "this is the way things are done on this ship." The captains of all of these ships personally met with every man who joined. During these meetings the captains stressed a few important points that they wanted each man to understand. What was stressed differed from captain to captain, but all of them stressed the command's desire to be the best and some basic values associated with the process that would be followed in the quest for excellence. For example, one of the captains placed special emphasis on indoctrinating young sailors who were just out of the training command and joining their first ship. After shaking hands and giving a new man a ship's ball cap as he welcomed him to the team, the captain would tell him something like this: "You know right from wrong, never do anything that is ethically wrong. No one owes you anything, take care of yourself first. Looking in the mirror in the morning, the only guy that counts is looking back at you." Then he would ask, "When is the last time you wrote home?" adding that if he did not write to his parents, he would be doing so in the captain's

presence. He concluded by telling the new sailor to give his folks good news, as they deserved this for what they had done for the man. The new sailor was learning from the captain personally that each person on the ship was important and that his new command was concerned about his welfare. A positive first impression was being made, and the man was being brought into the family by the head of the family, the captain.

Another captain said that he always pointed out to the new men joining the ship that the ship had a good reputation. He would mention all of the ship's departmental excellence awards. In this way, the new people realized that "they (their leaders) are serious about the ship doing well." At the indoctrination training for new personnel, the commanding officer would always tell them that "the Navy is a way of life" and that pride and responsibility were key elements of this life. Again, the focus was on a few key thoughts (we are after excellence and each individual is key to achieving excellence) that the captain wanted the new man to understand and begin to internalize.

When asked about the discipline on these ships, the answer was invariably "The captain is fair but firm, and he is consistent." In addition to being consistent from mast case to mast case, the captain's discipline philosophy appeared to be consistent with his broader leadership philosophy. People did not attend a mast and leave wondering why the captain did what he did. There were very few surprises at mast. Mast cases got what they expected the captain would give them, and, in general, the mast cases got what the crew felt they should get. The captain and discipline seemed synonymous. People were given a chance if they made a mistake, but they did not get many second chances and they were usually gone by the third chance. On all of these ships the captain tended to "give the max" for



the first drug offense and to get rid of anyone who was involved for drugs for a second time. The officers and men on these ships felt that drug use on their ship was low. On several, this was a big change from a year or so ago when drugs were a big problem.

In general, discipline was in automatic on these ships. Mast happened on the same day every week, only people who deserved to go to mast went, and those that did go got what they deserved. Discipline was no big deal. It was handled as it should be in the eyes of officers, chiefs, senior petty officers, junior petty officers, and non-rated personnel. Although each of these ships stuck to the traditional fair, firm and consistent philosophy regarding discipline, they varied a lot in the mechanics they used to carry out the discipline process. On one ship, the chiefs served as a discipline review body charged with investigating all report chits and forwarding their recommendations for processing to the commanding officer via the executive officer. On another ship, every mast was televised and shown on SITE TV during the noon hour. Watching the mast cases on TV was voluntary, but as it turned out, almost every member of the crew turned out to view the proceedings. The captain of the ship that showed the masts on TV stated that his ship had the lowest mast rate in the fleet and that televising masts had a lot to do with the ship's high state of discipline. On one other ship, the captain made masts a mandatory all hands evolution. Masts were conducted on the foc's'le in full view of the entire crew. This was the one ship's captain that we were not able to interview, but everyone else we talked with on this ship, from the executive officer to seamen, felt that the high visibility given mast cases had had a very positive impact on the ship.



## E. THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS, SIMPLE AND CONSISTENT

In general, on these ships, the management process tended to be as follows: The captain decided what was most important and what the key priorities were; middle management took care of most of the day-to-day "whats," and when need be, they provided the "why" something was important; and how things were done was delegated to as low a level as possible, frequently to the junior petty officer or non-rated man level. Although the captains of these ships left much of the determining of what would be done on their ships to their subordinates (provided their priorities were being complied with), they went out of their way to know what was being done on their ships; however, they consciously avoided involving themselves directly in the determination of how things would be done. They functioned as monitors and not doers. The captains were conspicuous by their absence in the running of the ship's routine. This was left to the executive officer and the officers and senior enlisted personnel. Several captains commented that frequently they felt the urge to intervene and show the cognizant person a better way (their way) of approaching problems, but they fought this temptation and forced their juniors to come up with suitable solutions on their own.

Planning received a lot of attention on these ships. The captains tended to do much of the long range planning (six months or more into the future). As one captain put it, "I'm the only one who has the time to look six months down the road." The rest of the intra-ship planning was done by the executive officer and the department heads, and monitored to varying degrees by the captain. Some ships used formal documents, such as plans of actions and milestones, and others did not. But all of the ships felt that they spent a lot of time planning and that this investment

in time payed off in the long run in increased efficiency and enhanced performance. The old maxim, "There is never enough time to plan but there is always enough time to do it over," was not the way these ships operated. On one ship the planning function was augmented by rehearsal as a means of achieving excellence. Whenever this ship had a major evolution to complete, such as an OPPE, the ship would add to its planning for the major event a full dress rehearsal several weeks in advance. The executive officer of this ship was convinced that this act alone had much to do with the top results the ship was able to achieve for all its tasking.

Meetings were not a problem on these ships. Meetings were held, but the ships were not "meeting crazy." The meetings that they did have had a purpose and were considered useful by those who attended. They also occurred on time and they did not drag on. One executive officer stated that he had inherited a ship that was in automatic when it came to meetings and daily routine. A lot of time was not spent finding people for evolutions and meetings. Everyone showed up when and where he was supposed to. We never did uncover why this happened on this ship, but, like the executive officer, we were impressed and of the opinion that this efficient routine contributed to the ship's excellence.

#### F. THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDS (NO STANDARDS, NO EXCELLENCE)

On all of these ships, the officers and the crew felt that their ships had very high standards across the board. High standards of cleanliness, appearance, conduct, and interpersonal behavior were, in general (there were some exceptions), a source of pride for the crews of these ships. It was frequently stated that when the incumbent commanding

officer took command, one of the first things he did was raise the standards of cleanliness expected of the ship. The junior enlisted frequently commented that they initially did not like the idea of having to work harder to achieve higher standards, but they were now of the opinion that whatever extra work it took was worthwhile. In general, they liked the fact that when one of the men from their ship walked down the pier he looked sharper than a man from another ship on the pier. They were extremely proud of the fact that their ship "was the cleanest in the fleet." (Just as many people we talked with thought that their ship was the steamingest in the fleet.)

Asked why they were proud that their ship was able to maintain higher standards than their sister ships, sailors would mention how they were proud to bring their family and friends on the ship and to hear them praise the ship's appearance and cleanliness. They also liked hearing such comments from people touring the ship when the ship was deployed. They also would comment frequently that it did not take all that much more effort to keep the ship looking as good as it did.

Another theme that ran through several of the ships regarding cleanliness and appearance had to do with the crew viewing their ship as their home. For those who truly internalized this view, it made complete sense to them to keep their ship looking good. Many of the sailors we talked to on these ships subscribed to what we read on the quarter-deck of one of the ships that we visited, "This is not just a ship, it is your home." This analogy of the ship being the crew's home fit very well with the analogy that the crew was not just a group of officers and sailors, but rather a family. The power of the "family" spirit on these ships was in several incidences incredible to observe. On these ships, the vast majority of the crew had internalized the

vision and the values of the ship as espoused by the captain. There was a powerful sense of ownership that made people think of the ship as "their ship" and not "the ship." High standards played an important part in the developing of such a positive attitude. They were a source of pride.

Asked about how standards fit into his command philosophy, ore commanding officer said that cleanliness was the key. "All else revclves around this." He noted that when he took cver the ship it was not clean, and, to get his views across to the crew, he told them that they might think that they were good but that it was impossible, in his mind, to be good even if you were dressed in a tuxedo when you were standing in a pig sty with muck up to your ankles, and this is the way he saw the ship. To get the ship clean to the ccmmanding officer's standards, he divided the ship into eighty zcnes and personally inspected two zones twice a week every week come hell or high water. This was how he got his standards across to the crew. He personally showed them where they did not measure up. He also noted that the fanrocm on the ship were in a poor state of repair when he assumed command. To get them up, he personally involved himself with one of the poorer fanrooms. Working with a small grcup of sailors, he had the fanroom completely refurbished in strict accordance with the technical guidance on how a fanroom should be. Once this was done and the fanrocm looked great, the commanding officer sent a memo (one of his few pieces of written correspondence) to each of the cfficers and chiefs. It went something like this. There was a major reclamation project taking place in the county of (name of the ship) and the model property (the fanrocm) had just been completed and was now open for inspection by everyone. It was anticipated that within the next couple of months all of the units in the county would be of the same high calibre as the model. With this model,



the captain felt his khaki could see what was expected of them and questions did not have to be asked and answered. The ship's fanrooms made a remarkable improvement within six months. The commanding officer felt that they were now the best fanrooms in the fleet. They were not only a source of pride to him, they were a source of pride to the crew.

This captain's method of communicating his standards to his crew was one of the more innovative methods we came across, but all of the captains we met on these ships went to great lengths to communicate their standards. The chain of command was used and so were written policy statements to get across the captain's standards, but much much more was done also. In fact, these captains prided themselves on never missing an opportunity to get across their standards to the crew. In addition to involving themselves totally in the zone inspection program, they pointed out over and over again to their officers and enlisted personnel what they expected, hardly ever missing an opportunity to talk standards. They talked standards to the wardroom, the chiefs mess, the first class mess, various divisions at captain's calls, and to new people joining. Stressing standards was an everyday job, one that these captains took to with all of their energy.

#### G. IN THE KNOW

On these ships, people were kept very well informed. Great emphasis was made to inform individuals from the day they joined what was expected of them, where they fit into the shipboard organization, and where the ship fit into the "big picture." When we talked with the chiefs, they felt strongly that they were "in the know" and that they had the information they needed to keep their personnel informed. Furthermore, the junior sailors also felt that they had a big picture perspective of what the ship was doing.



These captains went to great lengths to keep their crews informed of how the ship fit into the big picture, why it was going from point alpha to point bravo, the impact the ship's actions would have on the fleet, the Navy, and the nation. Even the most mundane tasks were explained as to the importance they had with regard to the ship being battle ready and able to carry out its mission. The crews appreciated the explanations of how what they were doing contributed to the whole of what the ship was doing.

The captains were key players in the communications process. They held a lot of captain's calls. Two captains held captain's call once a week. Underway, almost all the captains talked to the crew on the 1MC several times a day. When a new man joined, each of the captains met with him and communicated a short message of what was expected of him. They felt that personal communications were the key to getting their message to the sailors. Memos would not do, nor would SITE TV. The chain of command was important and used, but it had to be augmented by one-on-one communications. We were told that you probably could not communicate too much, but it was easy to communicate too little, and the results would be bad if you did not communicate enough. All of the captains felt that it was their responsibility to spend a lot of their time walking around the ship, not for the exercise, but because this was how they showed that they were truly concerned with their personnel and because this was the best way to communicate up and down the chain of command. Several of the captains said that they spent fifty percent of their time in port walking around the ship, asking people what they were doing, noting what wasn't going well (e.g., people working without a sense of direction), and just showing that they were concerned and involved with the ship.

## XI. HIGH ENERGY LEVEL/BIAS TOWARDS ACTION

The people we met on these ships were keen. There was a lot of energy about them. Yet these ships also seemed very relaxed. The officers and crew liked to talk about their ship and to discuss what was being done right. They were not hesitant to mention areas where their ship could and should improve. However, we were impressed with how few "gripes" the people we talked with on these ships had. We heard an occasional complaint about the SWO program not being as active as some of the junior officers would like; a couple of junior enlisted personnel took exception with some of the particulars of the command's dress standards; or one of the groups on the ship, e.g., the first class petty officers, might not be performing to as high a level as some of the other groups thought they should be. However, very little energy surrounded these negatives. The people got excited when they discussed what the ship was doing right, not what it was doing wrong.

### A. FIX IT NOW

There was also a strong feeling of independence about these ships, especially among the junior officers and the enlisted personnel. They saw their ship standing out from all other ships, and they looked upon the people who wrote the ship's schedule and inspected the ship as the opposition. They saw themselves doing great in spite of these outside influences. It was amusing to hear group after group on ship after ship describe itself as the steamingest ship in the fleet. They did not particularly like that fact that they had to do so much steaming, but they sure were

proud of the fact that they were steamers and not "pier queens." We heard young sailors just as frequently as we heard captains and department heads say that the ship performed best when it was underway a lot. In keeping with their pride in being independent and controllers of their own fate, at least within the bulkheads of their ship, we frequently heard the personnel on these ships speak highly of their ability to fix themselves, and not having to rely on the shore establishment. The general attitude was that their ship had the ability to fix itself ninety five percent of the time. If a problem did occur that was beyond the ability of the ship to handle, the ship would still have a go at it, and only after every effort had been exhausted to make the fix using in house talent would the ship go to outside activities for help. When outside help was requested, these ships would do everything in their power to learn from the outside help and to get the outside help off the ship as soon as possible after the solution to the problem had been found.

Another aspect of the importance attached to self-sufficiency was the fact that it was a norm on these ships that personnel would work as long as required to fix any of their equipment that went down. If that meant working the weekend day and night, so be it. This was one of the shared values of the command that seemed to fit into the quest for the shared vision of the ship as being battle ready. This attitude did not exist solely because the captain or the other officers said that it would; it existed because the crew had internalized this attitude of "my ship." One department head related how the attitude towards self-sufficiency changed when the present commanding officer took command. Prior to his arrival, the ship had a high opinion of itself (higher than that of the ship's superiors). When gear went down, a decision would be made as to how important

the gear was, and if it was very important people would remain onboard until it was fixed; if not so important, they would leave at the end of the day and work on it tomorrow. With the new CO, all equipment would be repaired before people hit the beach. If gear went down at night, people would be brought in to repair it. This policy was not well received by the technicians initially. There were a lot of complaints about working nights. But now, somehow, people had changed their views and no longer complained. They saw it as part of their job to work on their gear until it was up. On all the ships we visited we heard stories from the officers, but also the sailors, that their command's attitude to down equipment was "fix it now." In addition to agreeing on this as the attitude, these people, including those who had to work nights to make the policy a reality, acted as if this were the only way to run a ship, at least as if it were the only way to run an excellent ship. To them, it was a small price to pay to be number one.

#### B. INVOLVEMENT YES, MICRO-MANAGEMENT NO

The word "involvement" was heard over and over again on these ships when discussing the causes of excellence. The captain felt that it was important that he be very involved in the ship, the crew saw the chiefs as being highly involved in the running of their divisions, the chiefs were impressed by the involvement of the officers, the junior officers saw their captain's high level of involvement as proof that he meant what he said when he talked about the importance of personal sacrifice and concern for the welfare of subordinates. None of these captains, none of these wardrooms, and none of these chiefs messes was viewed by subordinates as being uninvolved in the day-to-day operations of the ship. Just the opposite was true, and their



involvement was perceived as a very positive force contributing greatly to the ship's success. The involvement was seen as a demonstration of interest and concern. It was not perceived as and did not take the form of micro-management. When dealing with specific problems, these commanding officers were seen as being interested and supportive of efforts by both the officer and enlisted personnel to produce not just descriptions of the problem but also solutions. These captains would ask questions and make comments, but they rarely would dictate solutions or courses of action. Several captains commented that they had to fight the urge to solve their subordinates' problems when they were presented to the captain by the subordinate, but they, on the whole, were successful in fighting this urge to take action rather than require action of others. One captain, perhaps the least process oriented commanding officer of the ones we interviewed, noted that the captain must make subordinates develop their own solutions for their own personal growth and, perhaps more importantly, to foster a sense of ownership in each man of the ship's problems. He concluded by saying he was continuously striving to get the junior enlisted men to take ownership for their work and to correct problems on their own, without having to be told to do so. This was seen as a key to achieving excellence.

### C. THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE STARTS ON DAY ONE

The commanding officers of these ships stepped on board their new commands knowing what they wanted to do with their ships. They did not take a lot of time to assess what they had in the way of a crew before making it known that business would not be conducted as it had been in the past (before their arrival). One captain who was typical said he took about a week to size up his ship. This was all the



time he felt he needed to determine what he had in the way of strengths and weaknesses. This assessment was done very informally by just walking around the ship and watching what people were doing and talking with officers and enlisted personnel. The early stages of these commanding officers' tours were not a time for participative management when it came to deciding upon the direction the ship would proceed and how business would be conducted. Sometimes this bias towards action and bias towards doing business as the captain said it would be done gave some members of the crew problems. There were several stories of difficulties experienced getting used to the new captain's desires and methods, but the transition period was short on all of these ships. Within months the men got on their captain's team (or left the ship), and there was no looking back, except to smile when retelling the story of what it was like when the new captain arrived. Most of the captains we talked with felt that it took about six months to get their ships on board to their way of doing business.

## XII. PRESENCE OF A COMMON VISION AND SHARED VALUES

### A. A FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT

On most of these ships, a great deal of effort had not been expended to develop a grand strategy for success; however, such a strategy did exist on every ship. The strategy existed because the captains of these ships brought with them a vision of what they wanted their ship to look like and practical techniques in leadership and management to take their ships in the direction of their vision of excellence. In addition to knowing what they wanted their ships to look like, these captains realized the importance of inculcating this vision in their officers and enlisted personnel. Sometimes this would take the form of philosophical discussions between the captain and his senior officers, other times it would only manifest itself in a consistency of action and interaction between the captain and various members and groups of the crew, but the presence of a consistent "modus operandi" was discerned by the officers and enlisted personnel as both a tactical game plan for governing day-to-day behavior and as a strategy for achieving a futuristic vision of what the ship could become. In other words, they knew what the captain wanted to do with the ship, where they fit into a plan of action aimed at turning the vision into reality, and how they were going to go about accomplishing whatever it was they wanted. Furthermore, by and large, many of the officers and enlisted personnel, even the most junior (which was truly impressive), had internalized the values associated with the captain's vision, whether or not the strategy to achieve the vision was explicit or implicit. If the captain was pushing

battle readiness, the crew was doing likewise. If the captain was hot on safety, so was the crew. When we asked a groups of E4's and below what was their captain's priority, invariably the answer would be identical to what the captain had told us his primary goal was during our interview with him earlier in the day.

## B. FOR THE CAUSE, BATTLE READINESS

As it turned out, the captain's overriding emphasis on all of these excellent ships, as pronounced by the captain and perceived by the crew, was battle readiness. What might be unique about the emphasis on battle readiness on these ships was not that it was the espoused goal of the command, but that the crew had bought into this strategy and accepted it as their own. Most of these captains went out of their way to relate whatever the ship was doing or what an individual was doing to the ship's mission and to being battle ready. As one captain put it, "I stress to the officers and crew why we are here. The bottom line is our mission." Another captain kept reminding his crew, "I want the Russians to quake in their boots when this ship steams over the horizon." He kept this image in front of the crew continuously, and he converted them to his way of thinking. They wanted the same thing their captain wanted, and they internalized his desire to make whatever effort was required to achieve the level of battle readiness needed. On these ships, such things as OPPE's, assist visits, and all the other requirements levied upon ships by outside sources were not viewed as ends in themselves. They were only bridges to cross on the road to battle readiness. Rather than peaking for inspections, these ships prided themselves as being always battle ready and being able to see past the inspections to the real world, the world in which battle

readiness was the ultimate criterion by which a ship would be judged. One captain said that he did nothing special to prepare for inspections and tasking, adding, "Frankly, I did not worry about much. I was just concerned that we would do our best." However, the captain was very proud of the ship's accomplishments.

### C. VALUE DRIVEN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to being in sync with their captain regarding the purpose, goals, and objectives to be emphasized on their ship, the officers and enlisted men on these ships were, in general, in sync with their captain regarding the means to be used to achieve these outcomes. Values associated with and styles for dealing with subordinates, superiors, and peers tended to be consistent among the various levels of the chain of command on each of these ships. That is not to say that all of these ships had similar values or leadership styles, they did not: but on any given ship in this group, values and leadership style tended to be consistent and similar. However, what seemed important to these crews was not the attention given a specific value or set of values, but the fact that the leaders of these ships were value driven when dealing with people and their actions tended to be consistent and in harmony with their emphasized values. The captains were not viewed as being capricious, and they did not allow their officers and senior enlisted to be so. People knew where the leaders were coming from and they appreciated the sense of stability that resulted.

The people we met felt that they were trusted and treated with respect. They felt that their efforts were appreciated and that it was part of their responsibility to demonstrate their appreciation of the efforts of their

subordinates. The captain was credited on most of these ships as being the man most responsible for enhancing interpersonal interactions by insisting upon behavior consistent with espoused values. He dealt with everyone he met in a professional and gentlemanly manner. This did not mean that he did not show his temper or censure poor performance, but it did mean that when this did occur it was always done in a professional manner and personalities were not attacked; only actions were criticized, not personalities. Also, in addition to setting an example for his subordinates to emulate, the captain either demanded that his subordinates act in a similar manner or he established a climate where such behavior became the norm through choice. We came across very few examples of officers and senior enlisted personnel being seen by peers or subordinates as ill mannered and unprofessional when dealing with shipmates. The feeling was that such behavior was not acceptable. When new people joined who started out on the wrong foot when dealing with their subordinates, their peers would take them aside and set them right. Several groups of junior officers and chiefs related how they had had new members join their groups and not hold up the norms of behavior for dealing with subordinates and how these new men had been set right and brought on board. The captain had set the tone, the officers and senior enlisted had internalized it, and new personnel were being indoctrinated without the captain having to do a thing.

The fact that such a positive type of climate flourished under these captains had very much to do with the high regard in which the captain was held. The phrase we heard over and over again when an officer or an enlisted man was asked to describe his captain was, "He acts like a human being and he treats others as human beings." One got the feeling listening to these junior officers and enlisted men



describe their captains as human beings, that this was one of the highest compliments that a junior could bestow on his senior.

In dealing with both their officers and the crew, most of the captains we met did so in such a way that a man's dignity was enhanced rather than lessened. On most ships, very rarely did leaders resort to emotional outbursts when they detected poor performance. Rather, emotions usually were kept in check. Efforts were made to find the cause of a problem rather than just treat the symptom of a problem. There were a couple of captains in this group who did tend to lose their temper, but somehow the officers and men under these leaders were able to put aside the emotions of their superiors and see them as professionals in search of top performance. Why these captains were not perceived negatively for their emotionalism probably has something to do with their personalities and style, but we were not able to put our finger on the answer to this intriguing question. The emotionalism of these officers was consistent with the high energy they had for excelling at everything they did, and the crew and officers, by and large, saw these officers' behavior directed to the same goal they identified with, excellence. Another attribute that the more emotional captains had that contributed to the crew's respect for these officers was that these captains were viewed as having short memories. In other words, they might get mad, but once the event or act causing their wrath was history, they put it out of their minds and the people involved felt that the captain did not hold it against them.

### XIII. AS THE CAPTAIN, SO IS THE SHIP

#### A. IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPTAIN

Without a doubt, the most obvious attribute observed on all of the excellent ships we studied was the importance of the commanding officer to the success of the ship. Some of the captains found this to be so obvious as to not bear mentioning, while others were a little surprised when we told them that they were seen by their subordinates as the key reason behind the success of the ship.

First we will let you hear what the captains had to say about their importance to their ships and their successes, and then we will hear from their crews. This will be followed by a discussion of the similarities and differences we observed in these commanding officers regarding the roles they assumed, the focus of their efforts, and the beliefs underlying their actions.

#### B. THROUGH THE CAPTAIN'S EYES

Asked why his ship performed so well, one captain said that it primarily was due to "intense command interest" on his behalf. He noted that he had served previously as a chief staff officer on a tactical destroyer squadron in the Atlantic Fleet, and during this tour he had become convinced that "the captain makes the ship." During his destroyer squadron tour, he attempted to discern and learn the keys to success and top performance by closely observing the squadron's eight commanding officers and their ships. He concluded that there was a perfect positive correlation between the performance of the ships and the involvement and abilities of the captains he observed. The great ships had

great captains, the fair ships had fair captains, and the poor ships had poor captains. He went on to add that he had never seen an exception to the great ship - great captain rule. This captain felt that his current command was a great ship, and much of this was due to the fact that his predecessor had been a great captain. This did not mean that the ship was perfect (neither he nor we have come across a perfect ship), but to him it was one of the best in the fleet and there was no escaping the fact that the previous captain had been the key to the success of the ship. This captain was modest and did not mention his importance to the current success of his ship, but everyone else we talked to on this ship came to a similar conclusion regarding why the ship was great: they had a super captain, the best. They also mentioned that his predecessor had been top notch. Among the more senior officers and enlisted personnel, there was a feeling that they had been very lucky to have had the opportunity to work for such great commanding officers. The junior officers and junior enlisted men also appreciated the ability and importance of their captain to the success of the ship, but, as one might expect, they did not focus on the uniqueness of their captain's abilities to the extent the more senior personnel did.

One commanding officer had very strong views on how one achieved excellence in ships. He stated, however, that before he would provide his views on what a commanding officer, officers, and crew should do to achieve excellence, he wanted to make perfectly clear his fundamental belief that he considered it mandatory that one "decide to use a positive approach" when taking command and not the very common "you can't do" attitude that he saw many captains using. By this he meant that there were reams of instructions and guidance on what a commanding officer could not

do. He felt that these were not worth the paper they were printed on. Instead of paying attention to what "the system" said a commanding officer could not do, he felt that it was critical that a commanding officer concentrate on what he could do to get the job done. He felt that it was his superiors' job to tell him what they wanted him and his ship to do, and then it was his job to determine how he would achieve that which they had told him to do. He added that if a commanding officer played it safe and worried a lot about what he could and could not do, he would, at best, have an average, safe, uneventful and uninspired command tour. "You can't worry about your career. You must be comfortable with yourself. You can't have both the security of doing it by the book and the energy that comes from doing it the way you feel it should be done. Command of a ship must be seen as an end in itself, and the ship as the captain's own little world."

The commanding officer felt that it was important that he instill in his subordinates a "can do" philosophy in sync with his own and that he give his subordinates the latitude to determine for themselves the "how" for the "what" that the commanding officer specified he wanted. In general, this commanding officer thought that he was successful in getting his officers to think positively and to think in terms of how they could accomplish a given task rather than why they could not. However, he was not confident that these officers would be able to retain such a positive frame of mind if they went to their next command and had to work for "can't doers." In general the captain felt that most (ninety five percent) men wanted to do well at what they and their organization were doing. However, the system sometimes limited individuals. As the captain, he felt that it was his job to remove the limitations on individuals and to instill in them the desire to be the best at everything they undertook.



A second captain gave his views on command. Asked to what he attributed the success of his ship, this commanding officer laughed and said that he did not have a one shot answer to this question. After some thought, he said that he stressed uniformity in the way business was conducted on the ship and in the standards used on the ship. He said that there was a sense of fairness and concern for the crew, and that "management knows their people." Regarding showing concern for people, the captain said that he would not settle for anything less than a high level of concern for subordinates. He said that everyone in the chain was responsible for insuring that this requirement was enforced. He added that he insists that division officers be close to their people, and that they strive to make their presence felt. When the captain discussed "concern" for subordinates, he mainly meant such things as insuring that their work and living spaces were up to high standards, that they were given help when they needed it in dealing with personal problems, and that other factors relating to their physical needs were receiving proper attention; however, he also saw the importance of juniors feeling that their superiors truly cared about their welfare, and, in this light, such care was aimed at some of the psychological needs of the crew. Several times the captain came back to the idea of stressing the importance of improving the quality of life of the crew. He noted that the ship was twenty years old and not as habitable as some of the newer ships, and that it took extra effort to enhance the crew's quality of life, but, even so, this could and should be done by all personnel in positions of responsibility. The commanding officer later added that the ship's success was not due to the fact that personnel worked harder than on other ships. He implied that his crew was more committed and more efficient and this led to their being more effective than most ships.



Another captain keyed on the importance of his being involved with his crew and his ship. He stressed that it was important that he display a high personal interest in what the crew was doing on a day-to-day basis. He spent a lot of his time walking around the ship, visiting most spaces daily. He would ask crew members what their problems are and what were their plans for correcting them. He would also point out those things that he thought needed correction. He might also go to the division officer and say "I did not see a sense of direction in the work your men are doing." The captain added that he took the time to get around the ship because he felt that if you take an interest in people they will respond.

As has been mentioned previously, all of the captains of these excellent ships were very oriented to doing well on the tasks confronting their ships and to being battle ready. Some, however, were more inclined to want to do well at everything, while others considered it important to concentrate only on what they thought was important. Whereas one commanding officer might see the Combined Federal Campaign fund raising drive as inconsequential and not contributing to enhancing the ship's battle readiness, another might see it as yet another way for the ship to distinguish itself. The latter group seemed to want to do well in even the incidental matters because they placed a very high importance on the ship and her crew gaining an image of themselves as doers and winners in everything they undertook. The former group seemed to feel that if the crew did well at its mission and those inspections and requirements directly related to its mission, pride would follow.

Whereas all of the captains were very oriented towards accomplishing the tasks assigned to their ships, there was a wide spectrum of beliefs and philosophies regarding how to deal with officers and enlisted personnel and how to

motivate them and gain their commitment for accomplishing the tasks that the captain considered important. All agreed that their personnel were the key to the success of their ships, but they differed on how to get the most out of this most important ingredient. At one end of the spectrum was the captain who described himself as a strict disciplinarian. He believed that it was his job to set standards high and demand that these standards be met. On the opposite end of the spectrum was the captain who had similar views regarding the importance of high standards and excelling at individual tasks, but who was of the opinion that it was his job as commanding officer to develop an environment in the ship that made personnel want to perform well. In the middle of this group was the captain who saw his role as that of a monitor of performance and setter of the proper example for professional behavior. Leadership, not a given leadership style, was one of the keys to excellence.

On these ships, however, it was striking to note the similarity in leadership philosophies found among the officers and senior enlisted personnel. The similarity existed not among the total group of ships but rather on each individual ship. That is, on one ship the captain put a very high emphasis on task accomplishment and a much lower emphasis on getting subordinates to internalize his desire that the ship do well. He felt what was needed primarily to get the results he wanted was to demand that his people put forward the requisite effort. If he had the energy to make these demands and to follow up on them, the ship would do well. Talking to others on this ship, we heard very similar comments from the more senior officers and enlisted personnel. "We tell them what to do and we make sure they do it and as a result we are top notch." On other ships in the group (the majority), the captain would stress the task and also stress the importance of developing a positive

climate throughout the chain of command for undertaking the task. He avoided edicts. On these ships, the more senior officers and chiefs appeared to follow the lead of their captain. They tended to cultivate rather than demand the commitment of their juniors as they went about undertaking tasks. This is not to say that they were "touchy feely" or that they gave priority to the concerns for individuals over concern for the task. The task always dominated on the ships we visited, but on many of the ships a lot of emphasis was given to motivating the crew and gaining their commitment to accomplishing the tasks confronting the ship.

### C. THROUGH THE CREW'S EYES

The officers and enlisted personnel working for these captains were quite convinced that their captain was the driving force behind their ship's success. In many cases the captain was held in extremely high esteem, in others he was revered, in none was he considered anything less than a total professional. On some of the ships, the admiration for the captain was amazing to observe. We frequently heard statements at all levels within the ship, such as, "This captain is the finest commanding officer I have ever worked for" and "If I ever have to go to war, this is the guy I want to go with."

When we heard officers and crew members state that their ship was great due mainly to the fact it had a great commanding officer, we would ask, "What makes him a great commanding officer?" The answers covered a wide range. Here is a sampling of what we heard. From a group of chiefs, "He is honest. He will chew you out when necessary but he gives recognition when it is due." From the first class on this ship, "He insures that all programs on the ship are emphasized. He is laid back and not afraid to

mingling with the crew. He talks to you and he is not afraid to listen to ideas. He helps good people when they want to re-enlist, and he is not afraid to get rid of bad people." The junior enlisted shared their seniors' admiration and respect for their commanding officer. They noted that "He knows what is going on in the ship, he gets around a lot, and he will help people when they have problems." They added that he was the driving force behind the high state of cleanliness on the ship. His zone inspections were demanding but highly regarded. One E3 noted that his captain expects outstanding results during zone inspections. He said that when the captain came upon a space that he did not think was up to his standards he would say, "If this is your preparation for a zone inspection, how will you handle everyday work?" This usually got through to the individual the captain was addressing, and as a result the ship was kept very clean.

#### D. WHAT THEY DID AND WHAT THEY STRESSED

In addition to the roles levied upon all commanding officers by Navy Regulations, numerous directives, and tradition, the commanding officers of these excellent ships assumed the following not so traditional roles which they and/or their subordinates considered important to their ships' achievement of excellence: sensor and molders of command climate, champions of excellence, long range planners, instillers of values, and integrators of action and thought. Some of these roles have been addressed in earlier chapters. Those that have not will be discussed here.

There was a uniformity about each of these ships, and it was not just in the results they achieved. On some ships their homogeneity may have evolved without tampering from above, but on others, it was a result of the commanding



officer's concerted efforts to achieve a oneness, to take the numerous parts of his command and transform them into a cohesive whole. None of these captains was prepared to sit back and deal with the organizational climate that they had been dealt. They set out to mold it to their liking, and they succeeded. For example, one commanding officer saw his key role as that of orchestrator of the command climate. To him, this meant putting flare into the ship, and instilling in the crew a sense of uniqueness. He saw himself as the "father figure" for the ship, the one person most responsible for setting the ship's tone. He did this in a number of ways, a key one being, as he put it, "by planning victories for the ship." By this he meant that he constantly was on his guard looking for competition that the ship could enter into reasonably sure that it would emerge victorious. This could be something as trivial as challenging other ships in the task group to a sailing competition, knowing full well that their ship was the only one that had any sail boats, to seeking recognition as the top ship to complete refresher training in a given year. In either case, the crew's image of itself was enhanced by such actions, whether it was by getting a laugh listening to the captain describe how their ship had offered the other ships in the task force to rent their sailboats for the competition, or by enhancing their sense of pride while listening to the Fleet Training Group commodore describe the superlative performance of the ship while undergoing refresher training. This same captain stressed that in searching out victories for his ship it was imperative that his actions be guided by the criteria that whatever he did he did for the crew. If this was not the case, the crew quickly would sense his lack of integrity, and his efforts would be doomed to failure.

These ships had extremely high expectations of themselves. On one ship, they prided themselves as only being



satisfied when they achieved 4.0 results. If they participated in a graded exercise and scored ninety five percent, everyone knew that the captain's first comment would be, "What about the other five percent?" To many, this demanding of perfection, even though they realized that many times they would not be perfect, was a source of pride. The other ships we visited went about stressing the importance of achieving excellence in all undertakings in different ways, but they all focused on the achievement of excellence. Furthermore, the focus and energy devoted to excellence did not just occur. It was directly attributable to the commanding officers of these ships. They made devotion to being the best, to being excellent in everything they and their ship undertook one of their priorities, and they devoted a lot of time and energy to their role as champion of excellence.

Giving his views on why it was important both to implicitly and explicitly stress aspiring to excellence to his officers and enlisted personnel, one commanding officer stated, "Being average stinks. Sailors did not join the Navy to be average. You have to rise above the rest. One of the commanding officer's primary duties is to insure that the ship does rise above the rest." To stand out from the rest took planning. This commanding officer was very concerned with the importance of symbolism (acts that take on important meaning not because of their immediate impact, but because of their harmony with the espoused values of the command; acts that bring about a synergy because they serve to demonstrate results being achieved are greater than the sum of the individual contributions being made). He saw himself as the orchestrator of the symbolism for his ship. A lot of this had to do with developing a positive public relations image of the ship. When the ship did well, those external to the ship were told about it. Why? Because the

crew deserved the recognition, because their families deserved to know that their loved ones were doing something special in an excellent way, and because the crew's image of itself would be enhanced by seeing their names in lights. Again, to achieve the results he was after, this captain stressed his actions had to be motivated by "for the crew" and not the self-aggrandizement of the commanding officer or any other individual.

This commanding officer attached more importance to managing symbolism than the others we met, but there were other examples of these captains being proactive towards symbolism when it came to developing their crew's image of themselves and their ship. On one ship, the crew was very proud of themselves and their perception of their professionalism. Their captain had let it be known that he would not tolerate what he considered unprofessional behavior from anyone on the ship and from anyone with which the ship came into contact. During a highly successful overhaul, the captain had stopped work on the ship when it was brought to his attention that the shipyard workers were not doing their part to keep the ship clean. Later, during refresher training, the captain had thrown one of the inspectors off the ship for what he considered unprofessional behavior, and shortly thereafter, when the ship was not getting any mail on a short deployment, he had sent a blast to the organization responsible for the mail service criticizing them as being unprofessional. Each of these acts was not motivated to rally the crew (at least no one felt that this was the case), but all of them had a very positive impact on the crew. These acts symbolized their command's commitment to professionalism. The crew saw the captain's words about professional behavior at all cost as being in harmony with his actions, and they admired this. In fact, to the officers and enlisted men, including the chiefs, these

stories were a great source of pride. These stories were powerful reminders of what the ship stood for, what the priorities were. They were not just sea stories, they were beginning to take the form of myths that would serve in the future to galvanize the ship's image of itself. We heard these stories from almost every group we met on this ship, from the captain to the E3's, and one got the feeling that these stories were used to let new personnel joining this ship that this is what the ship is all about.

It was interesting to note the similarities and differences in the roles the captains of these excellent ships chose for themselves. They all tended to take a "big picture" outlook on the running of their ships. They felt that they were the setters of policy and the painters and communicators of the vision for the ship. Although many felt that they had the ability to run portions of their ships more effectively than a given department head, they did not think it appropriate to do so. Rather, they saw the temptation to micro-manage their less knowledgeable subordinates, but, by and large, they successfully fought the temptation to do so. They felt that it was important for the effective management of the ship, and, in most cases, for the professional development of the individuals concerned, that the captain serve as the monitor rather than as the implementer of the performance of the ship. As a monitor, however, they differed a lot in how they performed this function. Some kept detailed records of what was going on in the ship and what was being required of the ship by outside activities, whereas others washed their hands of the details almost exclusively. One captain took pride in relating that he did not maintain a single file in his cabin, another showed us his black three ring binder with which he tracked all zone inspection discrepancy lists.

Despite their differences in leadership style, philosophy, and manner, these officers had several common attributes that contributed to their success and their ships' successes. From a simple skills profile derived from discussions with their subordinates, we felt that each of these captains was considered competent to exceptionally competent as technical engineers, administrators, communicators, and seamen. Some stood out as being extremely talented in one or more of these categories. None was considered weak in any of the categories. However, it did not appear that the success of these commanding officers was attributable primarily to their skills as technical experts, administrators, communicators, or seamen. Rather, in the opinion of these commanding officers and the opinion of their subordinates, their success was mainly a result of their ability to specify a direction in which they wanted to take their command and their ability to gain the commitment of their officers and enlisted personnel to follow them in this endeavor. How they did this differed markedly from captain to captain, but there was no denying the fact that each captain was able to get across to his crew where the command was heading and to gain from his crew the commitment and effort to do whatever it took to get to this common vision.

Much of the success of these officers had to do with their attention to the processes needed and used to manage and lead people. But before getting into the specifics of what processes these officers concentrated on and how they influenced the processes to get the results they were after, it is important to reiterate that all of these officers were very task oriented. That is, they had a shared view of the dominance of the mission of the ship being the sole reason for the existence of their ship, and they would not be satisfied with their performance or their ship's performance



if they were judged to be anything but outstanding when it came to accomplishing their ship's mission. This was a given! As such, it did not get a lot of air time when we talked with these officers. Instead of talking about the importance of the task, they preferred, as did their subordinates, to talk about the means used to achieve this one end, mission accomplishment. But don't let anything that has been said or follows give you the impression that task accomplishment was not the bottom line for these commanding officers. These captains were not driven to have the happiest ships in the fleet; they were driven to being the fightingest ships. However, along the way to being the fightingest, a lot of these ships discovered that they were among the happiest; and this had something to do with their being the fightingest. Instead of finding themselves in the proverbial vicious circle, they were where most of us would like to be, on a spiral leading higher and higher towards enhanced performance. One chief saw this happening at his level. As he put it, "We take care of our gear, which causes fewer casualties, which gives us more time for preventive maintenance, which results in better operating equipment, and it just gets better."

Having put mission accomplishment in its rightful place, at the top of each of these commanding officers' priority list, we can now move forward. In addition to an overriding concern for the accomplishment of the tasks facing their ships, these captains focused on their personnel as the one resource over which they had control that could make a major difference in how the ship performed. In dealing with personnel, both officer and enlisted, there were many different views and philosophies on how to lead and manage, but there was a consensus on the importance of personnel to any formula for success. As one captain put it, "The longer



I'm here, the more I come to realize the importance of people to the success of my ship."6

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6Lieutenant Colonel Jim Berg, U.S. Army, has published articles on both high performing individuals and high performing organizations. He describes the attributes of high performing individuals as follows: works smarter not harder, not a workaholic afraid of failure, is "an extraordinary delegater"; has holistic fitness, taking care of his mind and body to combat stress; visualizes what he wants then trusts and believes in himself that he will achieve what he wants; concentrates his energy on actions that fit into his game plan (purpose and goals) and on actions that only he can do; has a positive and confident self-image tending not to get down on himself; networks with both professional and social companions being very much a team player; and believes strongly in the purpose of his organization. Our discussions with the commanding officers of these excellent ships and with their subordinates led us to conclude that these captains possess many of the attributes of the high performing individual that Lieutenant Colonel Berg described. However, although these individual attributes have much to do with the success of these captains' ships, it is our view that their ships' achievement of excellence is due primarily to these officers' ability to transfer many of these positive attributes to their subordinates. [Ref. 5]

#### XIV. SAILORS, OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE

By now, it should be self-evident that much of what was right with these excellent ships had to do with their concern for the people who manned them and with developing a climate which nurtured a high level of individual commitment to the ships' visions of excellence. The pride, teamwork, high energy level, common direction, and commitment found on these ships all had to do with the attention given to the officers and men who manned these ships. In fact, one can find the bare essence of the success of these ships by looking at the attitudes of their people, from the captain to the junior mess cook. What follows is a look at those portions of personnel aspects of these ships that contributed to the ships being excellent at not only taking care of their personnel, but also being able to take care of their tasking. For on all of these ships, attention to personnel was not seen as an end in itself, but as the most important variable in their formula for success, for being battle ready.

As was mentioned earlier, teamwork was a recurring attribute found on the excellent ships. It was also an attribute that contributed to the excellent performance of these ships. But how was this positive attribute achieved? Except for one ship whose captain went out of his way to stress the importance of teamwork and the achieving of the feeling of individual ownership for the ship's problems, the other ships, on first glance, may have appeared to have been the benign beneficiaries of a sense of teamwork and all the positive ramifications of this important ingredient. However, upon closer inspection of the leadership and management styles found on these ships, it became clear that

teamwork was a logical by-product of a concern for people in general.

Here are some of the more effective things we observed these ships doing in the area of "personnel readiness," a term used by one of the commanding officers to describe one of the two goals for his ship, "combat readiness" being the other goal.

#### A. CONCERN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS GROWTH

Even though not all felt that their command cared about them as individuals and about the contribution they made to the success of their organization, the majority of officers and enlisted personnel that we talked to on these excellent ships truly believed that their efforts were appreciated and that their command was concerned with their welfare. For example, training programs were not seen as hoops that the ships made their personnel jump through in an effort to meet nebulous requirements from on high or as part of some inspection requirement. Rather the training programs were seen as manifestations of the commands' concern for doing things right and as programs that were in harmony with the commands' pronouncements on the importance they attached to an individual's self-development. Frequently we heard comments like, "I've never been on a ship that had such a great training program" or "This ship really cares about training. It is not just a paper work drill like it was on my other ships." Statements like this were coming from chiefs who had upwards to twenty years in the Navy. When it came to training and to professional and personal growth, their current ship was different than others in which they had served. In general, they felt that the training program was working as they always thought it should have on their other ships, but for various reasons never had. The

training program and their current command, in general, were helping them grow as professional sailors and as individuals.

Although the emphasis on self-development seemed strongest for the enlisted personnel on these ships, officer development was not ignored. Several of the ships had SWO programs with which the junior officers were very pleased, and, in general, the officers felt that they were being adequately prepared for their next level of responsibility. The junior officers were pleased with their preparations for becoming department heads, the department heads were on track for their becoming executive officers, and the executive officers were ready or being made ready for command.

In addition to an emphasis on training, on several of the ships we observed there was a similar emphasis on education, especially for those who did not have a high school diploma. One captain, in particular, put an especially high priority on education. He saw helping a sailor enhance his education as a logical element of an overall command plan that emphasized the importance of personal growth and enhancing crew members' self-image. At this command, education programs were conducted during working hours. To the crew this was perceived as strong action by the command supporting their words regarding their concern for the crew's welfare and personal development. When people completed an education program, and a lot did, the command made a "big deal" out of their accomplishments. Admirals were invited over to the ship to attend graduation ceremonies and to award diplomas and recognize accomplishments. The crew was totally behind the command's efforts to make education and personal development a "big deal." There were all types of positive side effects to this emphasis on education and personal accomplishments. The men's pride in themselves and their unit increased. The command's



reputation with senior officers was enhanced. Such events were great for the ship's public affairs program with the concomitant benefit of raising the image of the ship in the eyes of those who read such things as base newspapers (future crew members, wives and family of current crew members). However, it was important to the captain of this ship, and to the crew, that the education program was viewed not for its secondary benefits, but for its primary aim: developing the ship's most important resource, the average sailor.

A strong concern for the welfare and development of the officers and enlisted personnel existed on each of the ships. The strength of this concern varied from ship to ship as did the relative emphasis on what was considered to be most important for the welfare and growth of the crew, but the concern was always there and it was always appreciated by the crew. On some ships quality of life (messing and berthing, sports, education programs, etc.) was stressed more than the more intangible motivators, such as recognition of good performance and enhancement of self-image, and on other ships the emphasis was reversed. However, every ship gave attention to both the physical and the mental aspects of caring.<sup>7</sup>

#### B. NC CNE FELT UNDERUTILIZED

Responsibility and accountability had been pushed down the chain of command on these ships. On some of the ships delegation of responsibility occurred because it was pushed down the chain of command by each successive level in the chain; on others, it occurred because the captain had made

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<sup>7</sup>Much of the attention to motivation and commitment we saw on these excellent ships correlated very closely to Herzberg's views on motivators falling into two broad categories, hygiene factors and motivational factors. [Ref. 6]

it clear from the beginning of his tour that everyone would pull his fair share, which meant delegating work and its associated accountability to the maximum extent possible. But, no matter how the delegation of responsibility and the pervasiveness of accountability was achieved, it was an integral part of the "modus operandi" of these ships. The chief petty officers were especially key players on many of these ships. On some, the chiefs had been charged with being responsible for day-to-day shipboard management. On such ships, the chiefs had accepted this responsibility with great enthusiasm, and, without exception, they had produced outstanding results in the opinion of their superiors. It was noteworthy that the elevation of the importance of the chief's mess (relative to their perceived importance under their previous commanding officer) had been accomplished without alienating the Wardroom. In fact, on those ships where the chiefs were tasked with "running the ship," the officers invariably praised the chiefs mess.

The captains set the standard for delegation on these ships. They delegated a lot of authority to their executive officers and department heads, but they did so without lessening their perceived involvement in their ships. They also converted many of their subordinates to their views on the importance of pushing responsibility and accountability down the chain of command as far as it would go. One captain got across his views on the importance of each individual assuming responsibility and being accountable for his actions the first time the ship got underway with him in command. Under the previous commanding officer, the officers of the deck (OODs) used to check with the captain before initiating any actions, or they got the captain's input prior to taking action. The current captain let it be known, by his words and his actions, that the OOD was responsible for the ship and, as such, he had to develop

solutions to his own problems (always keeping the captain informed). No longer did these officers bring their problems to their captain as a matter of routine. Instead, they solved them by themselves. The captain was always in the background insuring that the ship's safety was not in jeopardy, but this was done in an unobtrusive manner. The officers on this ship read a lot into their captain's actions on the bridge. To them, his actions spoke louder than any words could. His actions showed that he trusted them and that he demanded that they meet their responsibilities. Obviously, they thought very highly of their captain for his demonstrated trust and confidence. They also internalized the effectiveness of the captain's actions and attempted to emulate his behavior when they dealt with their subordinates.

Although personnel were given a lot of responsibility, we did not find any officers or senior enlisted personnel who felt that they were in over their heads or had too much responsibility. This balancing of the individual's abilities and his responsibilities did not occur by chance. A lot of attention was given to putting the right man in the right job, especially those jobs that required a lot of leadership expertise.

## XV. OH YES, TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT

Maybe the reader has been wondering if we have short changed the subject of task accomplishment in our discussion of excellence in the Surface Navy. We feel that we have. One day on a ship was not enough time to cover everything, and upon reviewing our notes, we concluded that specifics about task accomplishment were not acquired in the amount we desired; however, we were able to draw some conclusions. They follow. As we have stated several times, if there was one thing all of these ships had in common, it was that they were good at getting the job done. All the operational tasking and hurdles associated with inspections, commitments, assist visits, VIP visits, etc., were accomplished in what the ships' superiors and the ships' personnel thought was an excellent and often superior manner. Furthermore, on each of the ships, there was a strong sense of pride at all levels of the chain of command surrounding their accomplishments.

Getting results and taking pride in the results was what these ships had in common. What differentiated them was the approach these ships followed in accomplishing their results. In general, the ships we observed fell into two categories regarding their approach to achieving outstanding task accomplishment. The first group consisted of those ships which used upcoming short and long range tasking as the focus of the ship's efforts and energy. When a task was identified, an upcoming INSURV inspection for example, the top management made it known that doing well on this inspection was a must and everyone was to do whatever it took to 4.0 the inspection. In this group of ships, we found the commanding officer who stated that achieving top results was



quite easy. You just demanded that people go out and do what the system requires them to do. If they get less than 100 percent, than they did not do their job as well as they should have. In that case, it was his job to exert pressure so that people knew that he was serious about getting the job done. The crews of ships in this group all knew that it meant a lot to the captain that the ship win all of the departmental E's and the battle efficiency "E". These were prized awards that were believed to personify the ship's ability to get the job done. The link between doing well in the competition for these awards and being battle ready was self-evident to the leaders of the ships in this group; therefore, they reasoned, if you want your ship to be battle ready (all of the leaders of these ships did), you go out and get maximum results on the type commander's requirements for departmental excellent awards. If you do a good job at this, you will be pretty close to your overall objective of being battle ready.

In the other group of ships, the importance of departmental awards and the battle efficiency award was down played by the top leaders on the ship, and the crew saw winning awards as somewhat of a nice surprise. We really heard comments like, "We don't think about the awards. Every now and then someone shows up and gives us some plaques for departmental excellence. These are nice, but we are not out to win awards. We just want to be the best ship and to excel at everything we do. If we do this, the awards will come, I guess." On these ships, "doing things right, doing everything right" on a day-to-day basis was the rallying cry and the driving force behind their outstanding record of task accomplishment.

As was so common with many of the attributes we observed on these ships, each ship's attitude towards task accomplishment, whatever it was, tended to be consistent

throughout its chain of command. On those ships that focused on winning awards, almost everyone we met felt that it was important that awards be won, and that they do their part to help the ship win the awards. On those ships that concentrated on doing day-to-day activities right and letting the awards take care of themselves, the officers and men we met lined up behind this philosophy four square. Obviously, someone had orchestrated the development of the consensus attitude towards task accomplishment on these ships. The people we talked with did not see some omnipotent hand moving them in the direction of this consensus, but we believe someone was causing this to happen, and that someone was the captain. As was mentioned in the section on command vision, these captains did not always have an explicit plan of attack for developing their command strategy and command climate and attitudes, but an effective strategy and powerful climate always emerged - primarily because of the consistent actions of the leaders of these ships.

## XVI. CONCLUSIONS, COMMENTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

So there you have it, the views of twenty one senior surface warfare officers on what excellence looks like and the stories of six ships that personify excellence. And what's to be concluded from these leaders and these ships?

First, there is a lot to be learned from talking with senior surface warfare officers. A statement of the blinding obvious? Maybe, but maybe not. Every officer we met with imparted to us interesting and insightful information about the criteria used to judge excellence in the Surface Navy. There were very few surprises in what they told us, but we were impressed by the uniformity of what we were told and the strength of feeling surrounding the views expressed by these senior officers. We had always known the importance of squared away quarterdecks and clean and ship-shape ships, but after talking with these senior officers we gained a better appreciation of how the seemingly routine fit into the whole. The linkage between cleanliness and battle readiness, although not fully explained in a strictly rational manner, was explained in terms of the values held by these officers whom we believe to be typical. Chapters two through five tell what the boss wants and some of the why behind his desires and demands. This should make giving him what he wants a little easier, and it should help avoid self-delusion. You might think that you are the best operator in the fleet and that the boss realizes this and does not care very much about the fact that your ship is not as sharp looking or that your crew is not as turned on as some of the others in port, but we did not run across a single senior officer who thought in these terms. Senior officers did not think in terms of operational excellence being the

bottom line and everything else as being inconsequential. Instead, they concentrated on the steps that they believe lead to excellence, such as inspections and the developing of a positive attitude by a crew. They believed in "the system," and they felt that it provided the path to the goal of battle readiness. If one followed this path, battle readiness would result; if one did not, battle readiness would not be achieved. Based upon the benefits we received from talking with a broad group of senior officers on the subject of excellence in the Surface Navy, we strongly recommend that senior officers take the time to have similar discussions with junior officers. We believe the benefits of allowing junior and mid-grade officers the opportunity to talk candidly with senior officers about the "whats" and "hows" of excellence would be of significant value to these officers.

When we went aboard these excellent ships, we were wondering what we would find. Would these ships appear to be no different than those that we had served in previously? Well, it did not take us long to realize that these ships were different. There was a positive atmosphere and high energy about these ships that neither of us had encountered previously and, coupled with the outstanding operational reputations of these ships, we knew that we had hit upon something that would be of value to us as naval officers and something that could be of value to others in the surface community. Unfortunately that "something" was not all that solid and describable. It was there, there was no doubt about it. But to put it into words was another matter. Even the people who were part of these ships and their superiors said things like, "You can't put your finger on it, but you can feel it," when describing these ships. Chapters six through fifteen are our attempt to put our finger on it. There is a lot of "motherhood" in our



observations, and we don't think there are any new concepts of management and leadership. We did not stumble upon a new model for analyzing excellence or a new theory for achieving excellence. Our findings are in agreement with almost every book that we have read on leadership and management. Our observations confirmed for us Herzberg's views on motivation, the effectiveness of attending to all levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Berg's generic attributes of excellent organizations, the power of recognition as described by Blanchard, the validity of McGregor's theory Y assumptions about people in organizations, and the importance of stressing both concern for task and concern for people as Blake and Mouton have pointed out in their managerial grid concept. Peters and Waterman summed up what we saw when they wrote in In Search of Excellence, "Excellent companies were, above all, brilliant on the basics." Excellent surface ships are also brilliant on the basics. As such, they are able to achieve synergy, that is, they are able to take average abilities and combine them in such a manner that the end product is greater than the sum of the parts, the individuals who make up these organizations. The common man can produce uncommon results; you don't need an all-star team to have a great ship. And, if there is a starting point for the achievement of excellence, it is having a captain who knows what excellence looks like and knows how to share his vision with his personnel while simultaneously gaining their commitment to the attainment of excellence.

The value of this study to its authors has been significant, and it is our opinion that the study offers value to the Navy in general. The excellence we observed on these ships was not the result of luck. It was the result of the leadership of the commanding officers of these ships. These officers joined their ships with a vision of excellence and

then they turned their vision into reality. In addition to striving for the common goal of operational excellence, we were struck by the fact that these commanding officers and their ships demonstrated a consistent and common set of attributes that lead to their achievement of excellence. They developed individuals and groups that were proud and energetic and that worked as a team. They not only passed their vision of excellence and the means for achieving excellence to their subordinates, they developed a climate that led to their vision being internalized by the vast majority of their subordinates. Throughout the entire process of achieving excellence, the leaders of these ships focused on the tasks of the ship, but additionally, they focused on gaining the commitment of their crew. It is our strong opinion that the excellence we observed on these ships can be achieved throughout the surface community and should be used as a beacon for those in search of such excellence. There was a consistency that ran through these ships. There are common attributes of excellence. This paper is our attempt to nail down what these attributes are and what they look like. The attributes we identified were:

- Good ships getting better
- Pride in evidence at all levels
- Teamwork, not just a concept but a way of life
- The ship in automatic
- High energy level/bias towards action
- Presence of a common vision and shared values
- As the captain, so is the ship
- Sailors, our most important resource
- Oh yes, task accomplishment

and were chosen (1) to give the reader an appreciation of what excellence looked like on these ships, and (2) to illuminate the means used to achieve this excellence.

Obviously, we do not believe we have written the definitive study on excellence in the Surface Navy. The attributes we have chosen to describe were the ones that impressed us. Others may have interpreted what we saw differently. But we believe we are close to the mark when it comes to describing excellence in the Surface Navy. More should be done, however. There are many excellent ships that we were not able to observe. Furthermore, we limited our study of excellence to the surface community. We hope that our paper will serve as a starting point for further study and discussion of not only excellence in the Surface Navy, but also of excellence in other Navy communities. We fully support the efforts of the Director, Human Resources Management Division (OP 15) and the McBer Company in their on-going study aimed at differentiating between top performing units and average and below average units in both ship and aviation commands. Furthermore, we recommend integrating the lessons of "Excellence in the Surface Navy" into the Navy's leadership and management training. The Navy can only gain from an enhanced understanding at all levels of command of what excellence looks like and how the best are able to achieve excellence. There may be no right or wrong answers when it comes to leadership and management, but there are benefits to be had from an evolving analysis and discussion of what we want our leaders and managers to achieve.

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